LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連れ狼

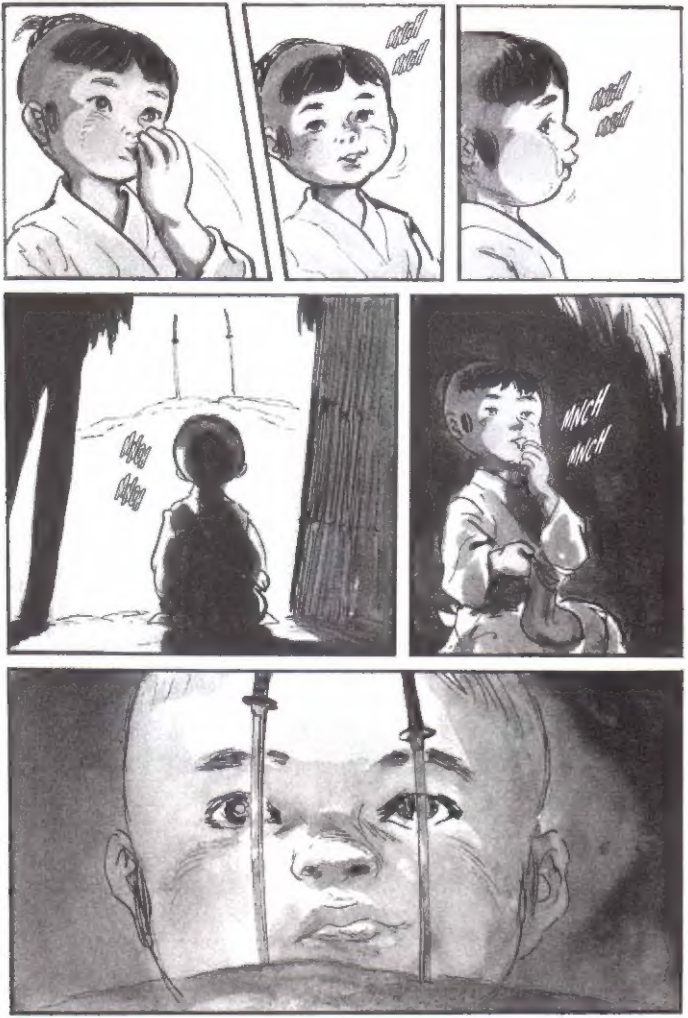
VOLUME 27

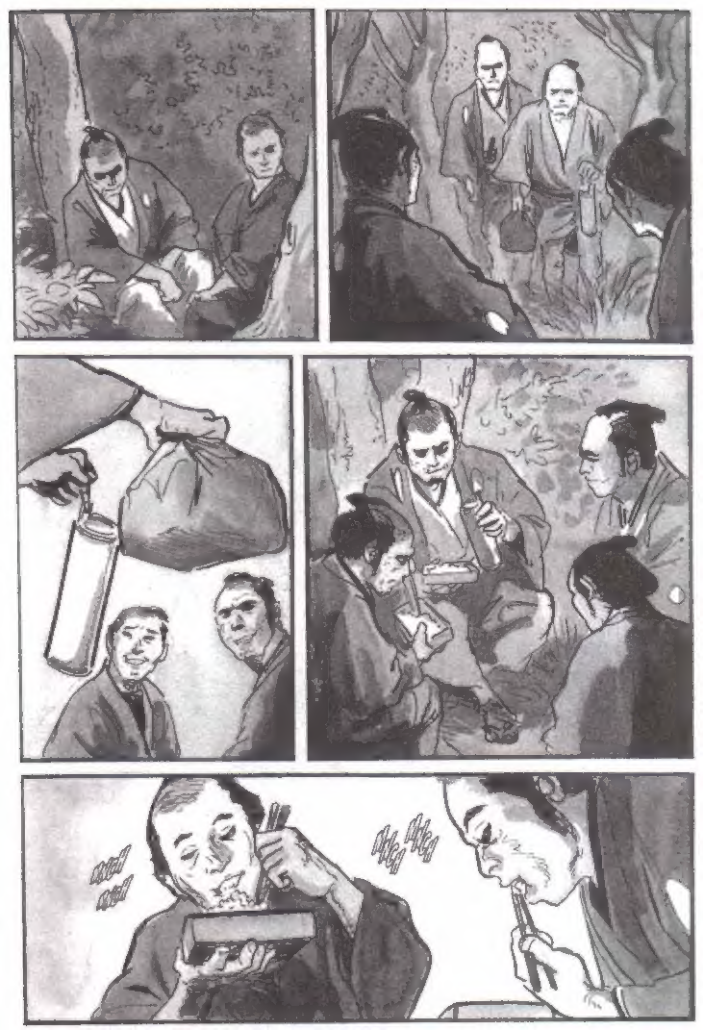
BATTLE'S EVE

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

the hundred and thirty-third

To Protect And Defend

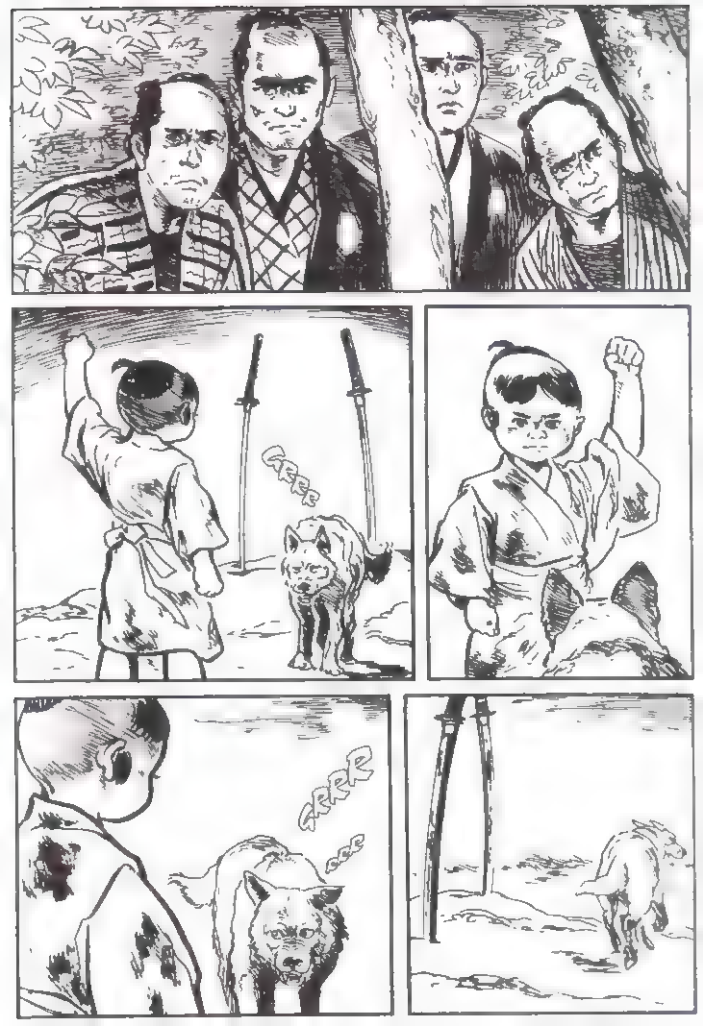

mm!
mm!
mm!
mm!
MNCH
MNCH



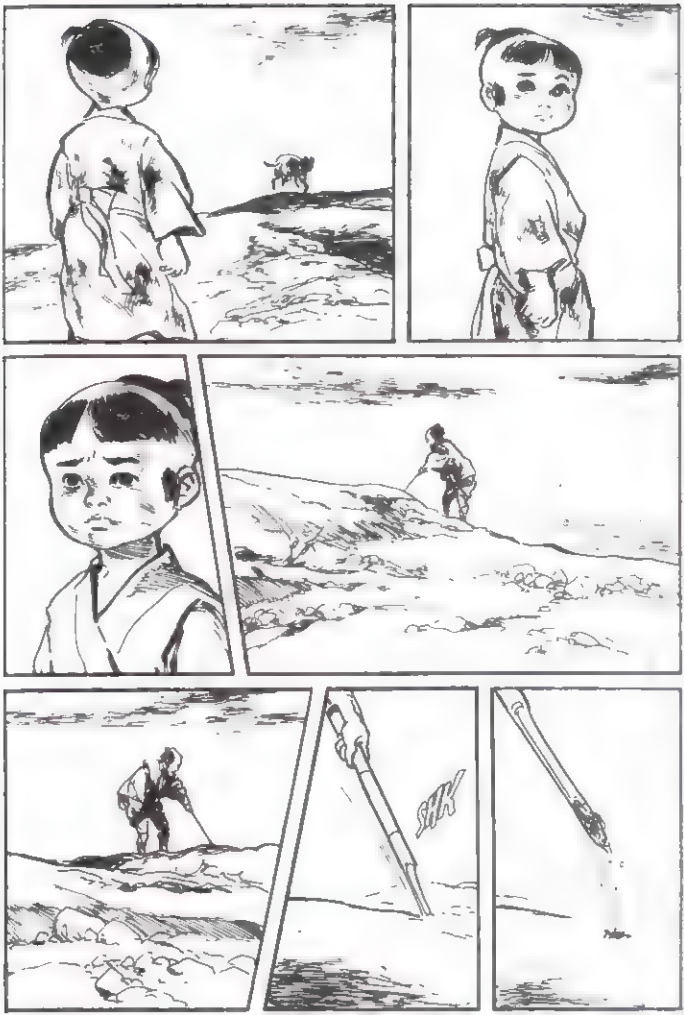
IT'S THE TSUKA MATSURI FESTIVAL...
YEAH...AN' WE'RE EATING CRAP!
ぶつぶつ
WHAT A PAIN...
WONDER WHERE ŌGAMI ITTŌ WENT...?
DUNNO. ALL WE CAN DO...
ぶつぶつ
...IS ぶつぶつ WAIT FOR HIM.
ぶつぶつ
ぶつぶつ
SPLAT
TICK

SPLT
SPLT

SHOO!
SHOO!
SHOO!
GRRR
RUPRR



WHEW!
BUT WHY DIDN'T HE THROW A ROCK AT IT?
YEAH. I WONDER.
HAD ONE RIGHT IN HIS HAND. BUT HE THREW IT AWAY SHOOK HIS FIST
SO HE WOULDN'T HIT THE SWORDS...?!
COME ON— A LITTLE KID LIKE THAT?
NOW, IF HE WAS A BUSH!...
BUT IF HE'S NOT PROTECTING THEM, WHY BOTHER TO SCARE THE DOG OFF?
DAMN...!


SHK

HM
?!
WHAT THE DEVIL ? SWORDS?!

AND A KID WAY OUT HERE ?
HUH?! YOU DON'T WANT ME TO WALK THERE. IS THAT IT?
COME ON. THEY'RE NOT *YOURS*, RIGHT?
WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE? LET ME SEE--

WOO
HUH! SO YOU REALLY MEAN IT?
GUESS THERE'S SOME REASON.
THEY SAY SAMURAI STICK THE R SWORDS N THE GROUND WHEN THEY POSTPONE A FIGHT KIND OF A PROMISE

BUT YOU, KID
DON'T LOOK LIKE A SAMURAI BOY HAM.
OKAY YOU WIN.
DROP THE ARMS AND ENOUGH WITH THE SCARY FACE.

MEH. THAT'S BETTER.
I'M DOBURO-NO-HANSHICHI KID I MAKE IMADO-YAKI
EVER HEARD OF IMADO-YAKI?
THEY'RE ROOF TILES.
SEE? LIKE ON TOP OF ALL THOSE HOUSES?
TO MAKE GOOD TILES, YOU NEED GOOD CLAY. CLAY FROM IMADO IS PRETTY DAMN GOOD, BUT THERE'S BETTER STUFF AROUND.

SO, I *LOOK* FOR IT LIKE THIS
KNOW *WHY* I LOOK FOR GOOD CLAY?
CAN YOU *GUESS*?
'CAUSE GOOD TILES STOP *FIRE*, KID EDO'S A *BAD* PLACE FOR FIRES
ALL THOSE WOOD HOUSES, SEE? EMBERS JUMP FROM ROOF TO ROOF, AND *WHOOSH!*
BUT COVER A ROOF WITH *GOOD TILES*...
AND THE FIRE WON'T SPREAD, SEE?
GOT THAT?

EXCELLENT! SO I LOOK FOR GOOD CLAY
THE CLAY HERE ON THE HATCHO IS GREAT...
AND ESPECIALLY RIGHT BY THOSE SWORDS
POK
I DON'T WANT THEM RUSTY OLD SWORDS
I JUST WANT TO GET SOME OF THAT SPECIAL CLAY YOU SEE?
HRM.

LOOK, KID I'M SURE YOU GOT YOUR REASONS
BUT GOOD ROOF TILES HELP EVERYONE YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND, OKAY?
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU OR NOTHING
SO JUST LET--
KRNCH

OW! DAMN IT, THAT HURT!
WHATCHA THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
AAH?! ARE YOU OKAY?!

DAMN. I DON'T BELIEVE IT
OKAY YOU WIN, KID
I WON'T GO THERE. OKAY? RELAX
STUBBORN? FEARLESS? WHATEVER YOU'RE SOME KID
LEMME BANDAGE THIS
WHERE'S HOME?

I SEE WELL, WE GOTTA CLEAN UP "THAT" CUT
LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON. IT'S SCARY
HE IS PROTECTING THEM! AND SERIOUSLY.
A HUT, WAY OUT HERE...
SOME THING'S UP FOR SURE

WONDER IF THERE'S ANY MEDICINE..?
DON'T SEE ANY
DIRT'S BAD YOU COULD GET LOCKJAW
YOU STAY HERE AND WAIT FOR ME, KID I'LL RUN AND GET SOME STUFF
WHOOSH!!
WIND'S COMING UP DRY
I DON'T LIKE T T'S FIRE WEATHER.

THINK
OKAY! HERE WE GO!

NOW LET'S DO THIS RIGHT

LORDY, KID! WERE YOU [illegible] NIGHT?
DAMN. THIS LITTLE BOY WHAT MAKES HIM DO IT ?
LOOK. I'LL WATCH, OKAY? GET SOME SLEEP
HE TRUSTS ME. LOOKS ME IN THE EYE. AND TRUSTS ME
WHAT A BOY !
NO PROOF I WON'T GO DIG THERE. JUST TRUST

FWHOOSH
DOHN DOHN D-DOHN
KANNG KANNG KANNG

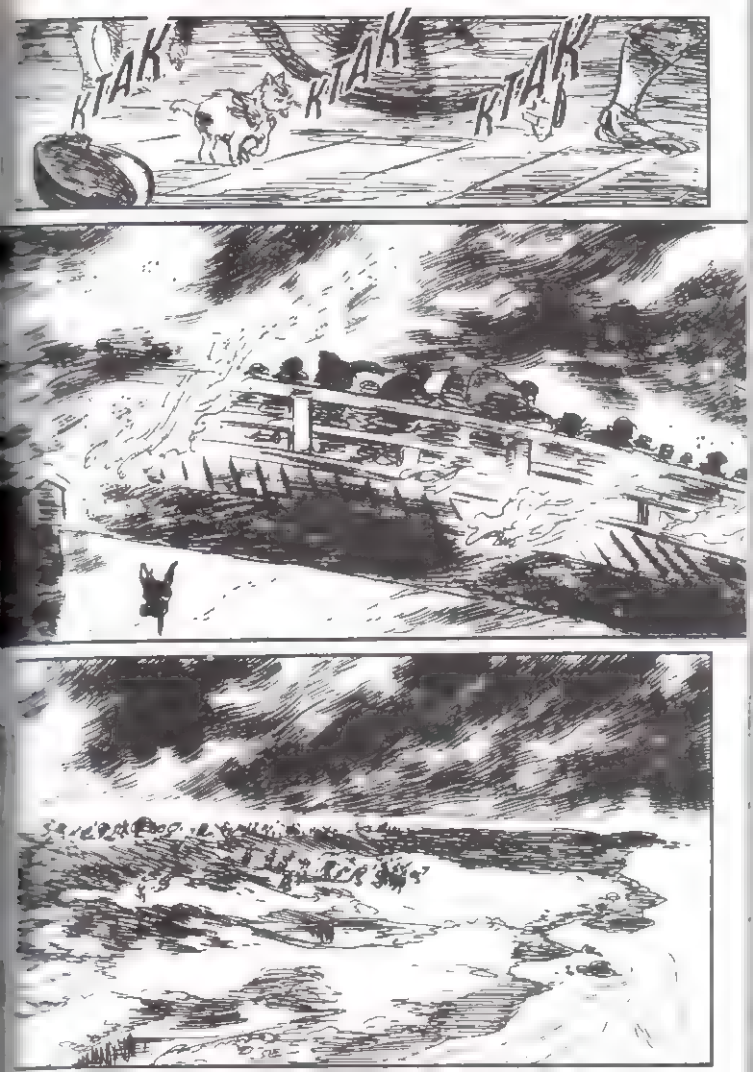
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
FIRE!!

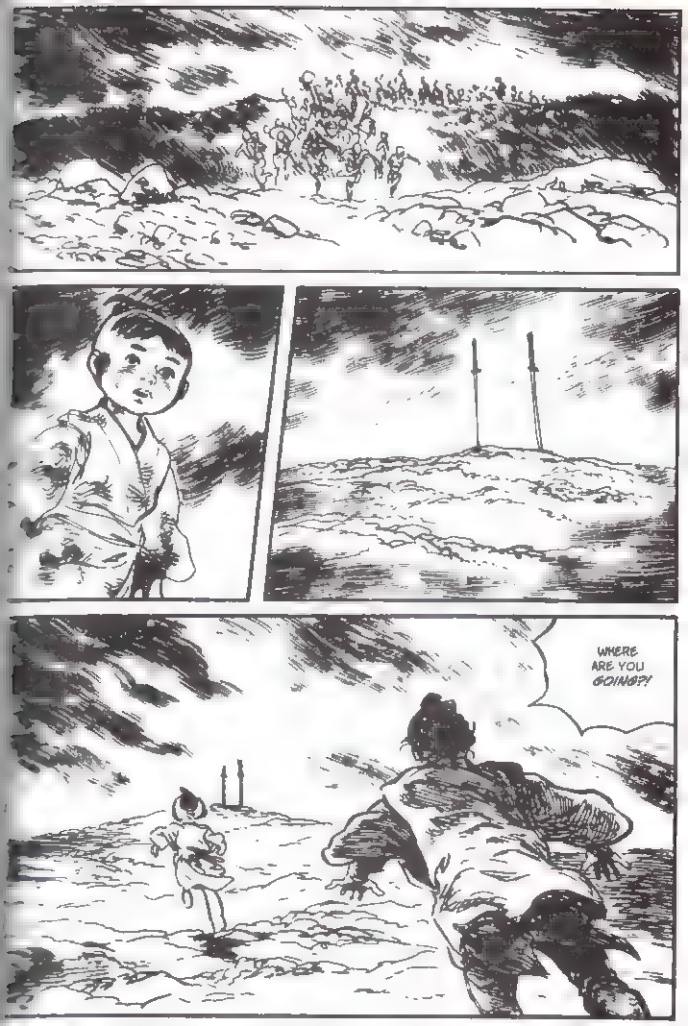
GOOD GOD! IT'S ALREADY HUGE!
AAH...!

KWHOOOSH
FWOOSH

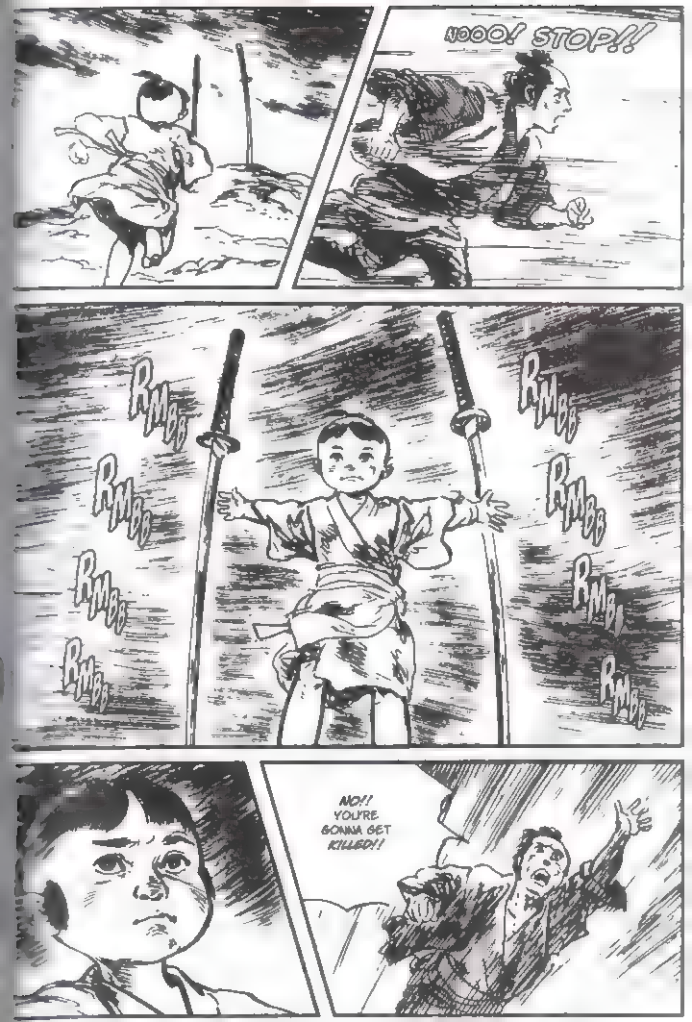
KWHOOOSH
FWOOSH

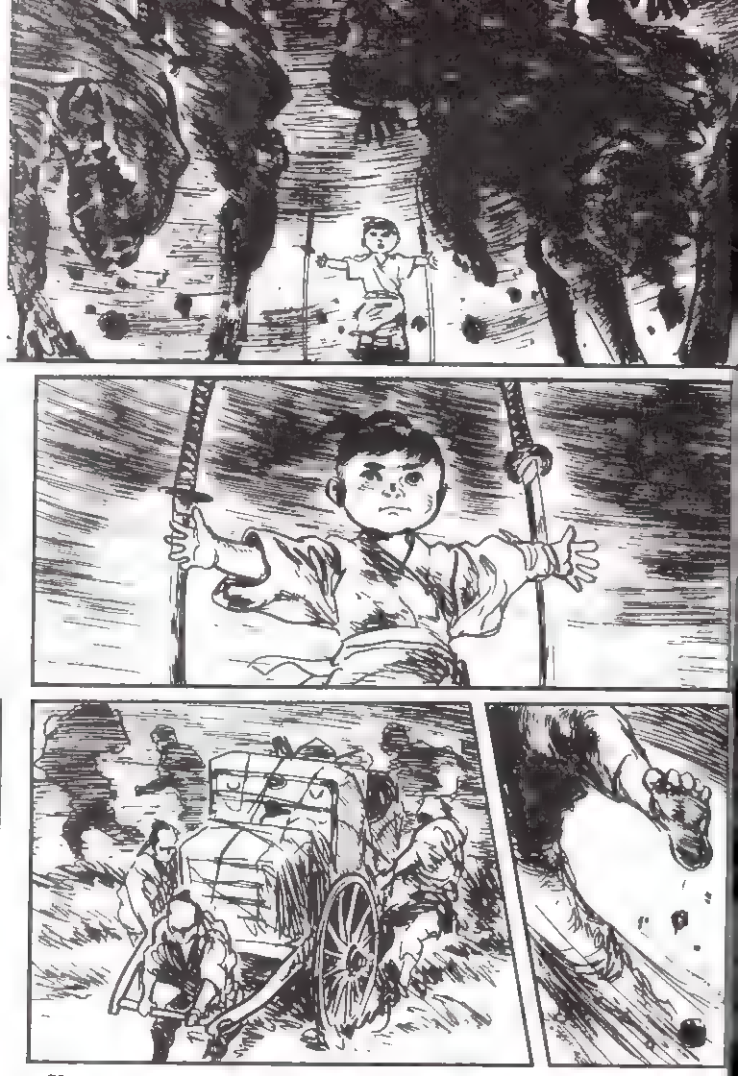
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
KANNG
MOVE!!
MOVE!!
COMING THROUGH


КТАК
КТАК
КТАК


WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!

HEY! KID!!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

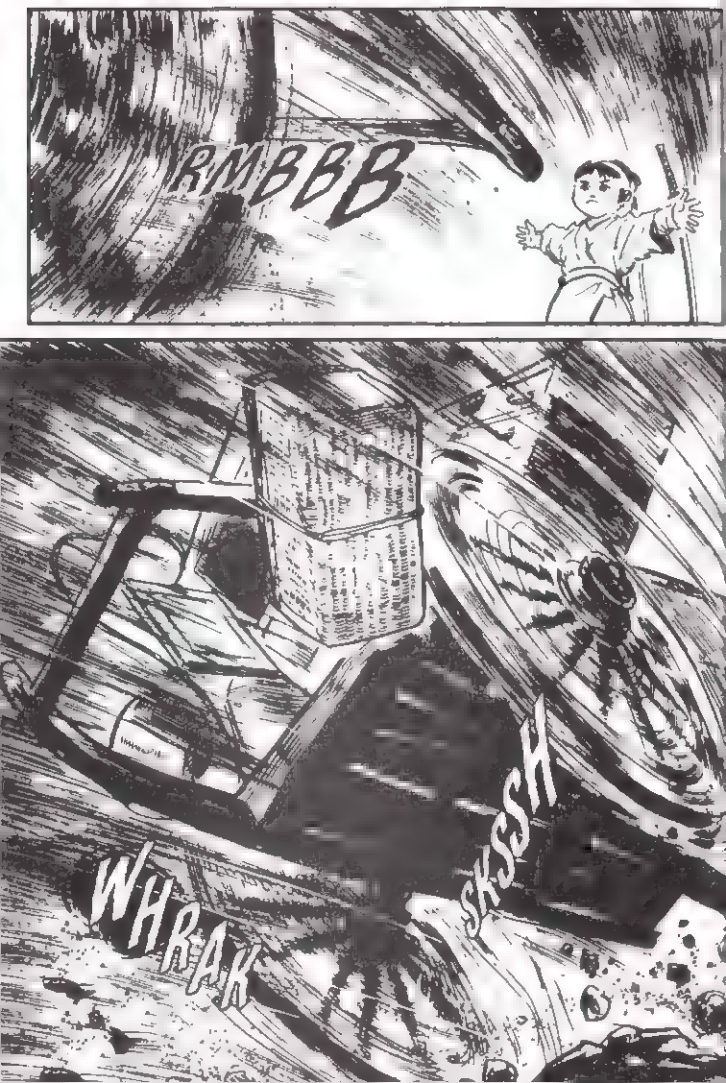

NOOO! STOP!!
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
RMBB
NO!! YOU'RE GONNA GET KILLED!!



KRASSH
WHAM
RMBBB

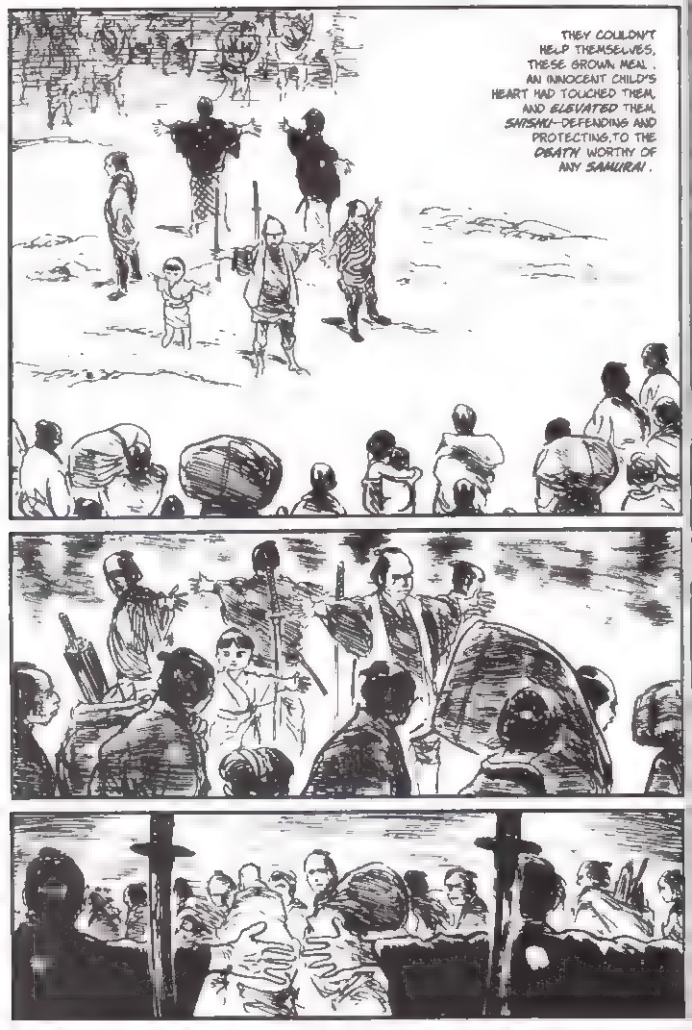
NOOO! LOOK OUT!!
YOU'LL GET KILLED! RUN, YOU STUPID KID!!
KTAK KTAK
RMBBBBB

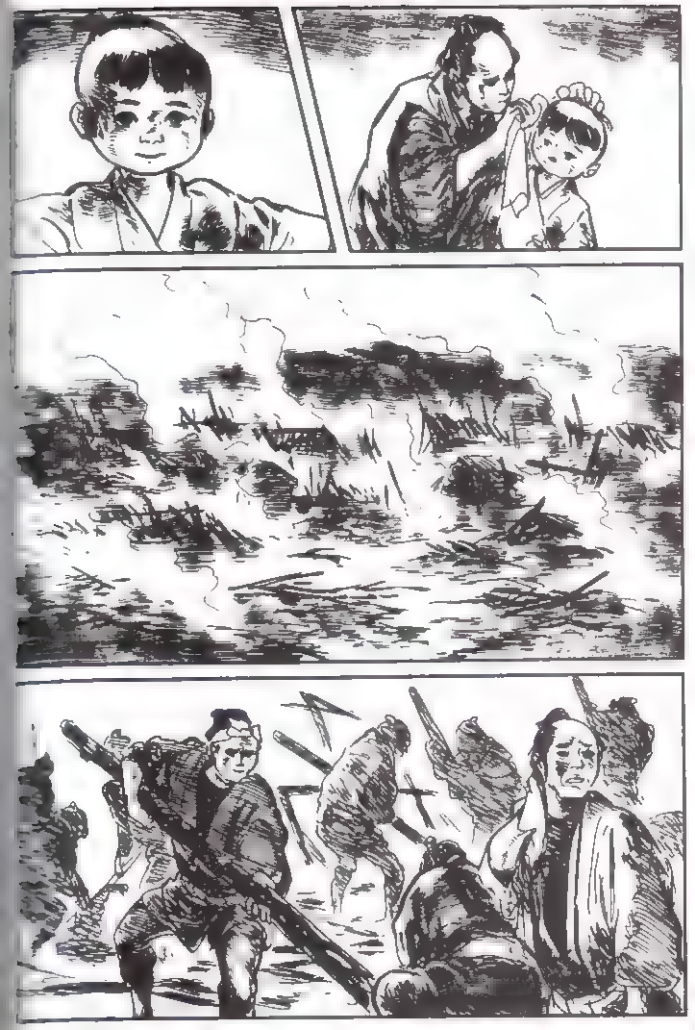
AAAHHH!
RMBBBBB
AAAHHH!!


RMBBB
WHRAK
SKSSH

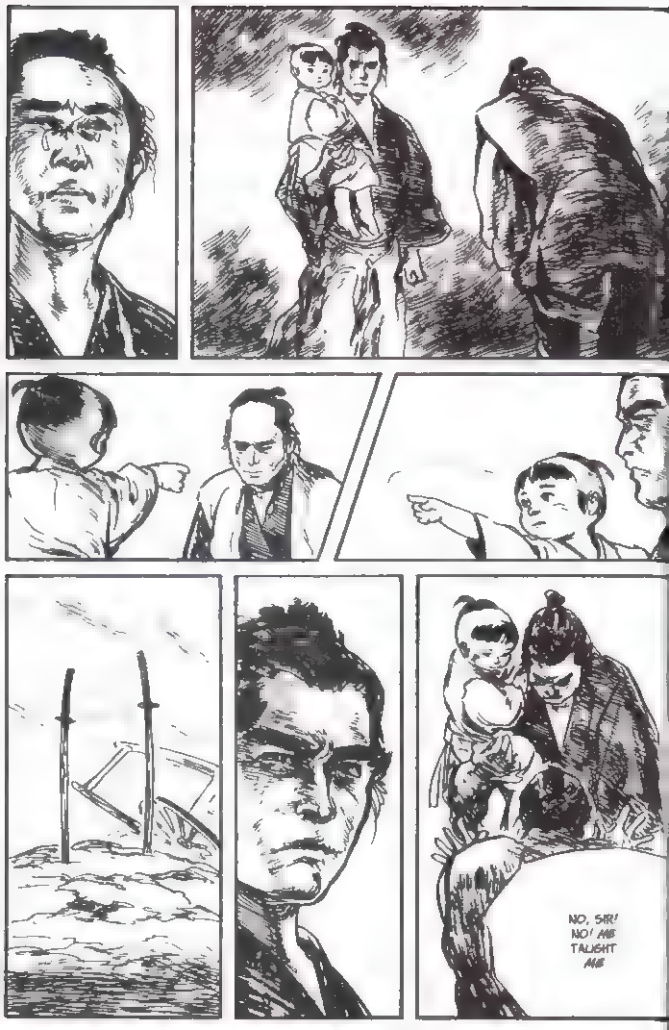
FWOO
KID..?!
AHH!!

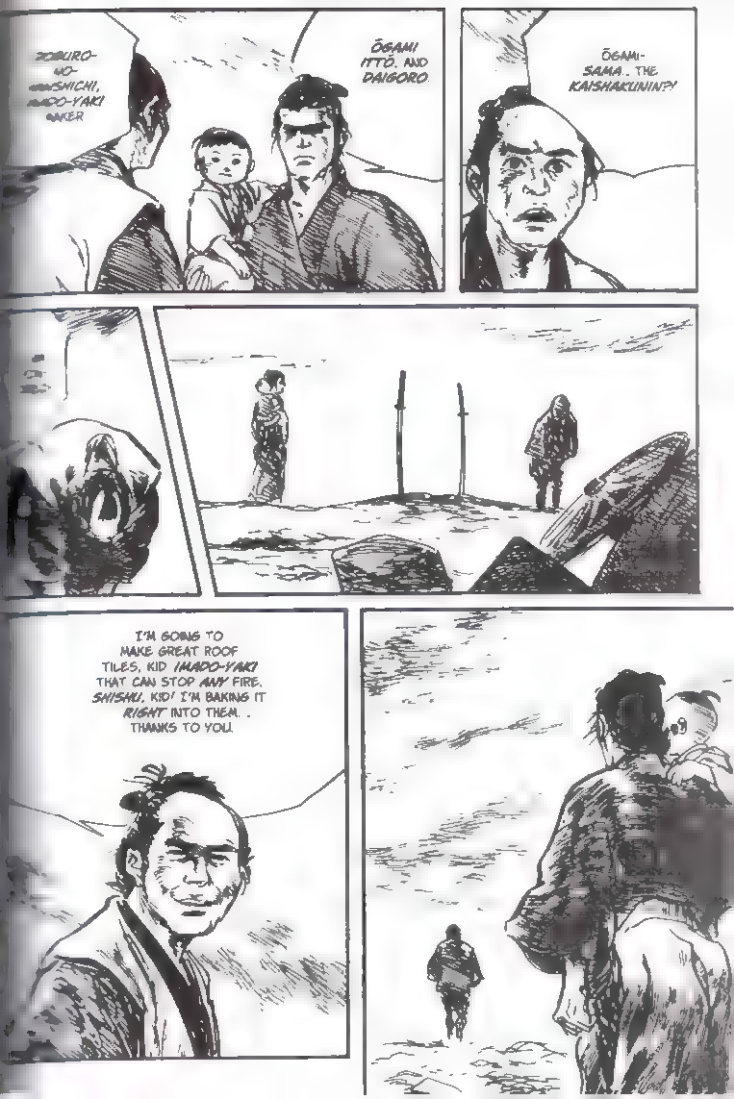
?!
WHAT...?!
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?!
NGAAA..


THEY COULDN'T HELP THEMSELVES, THESE GROWN MEN. AN INNOCENT CHILD'S HEART HAD TOUCHED THEM, AND ELEVATED THEM, SAMURAI—DEFENDING AND PROTECTING, TO THE DEATH WORTHY OF ANY SAMURAI.



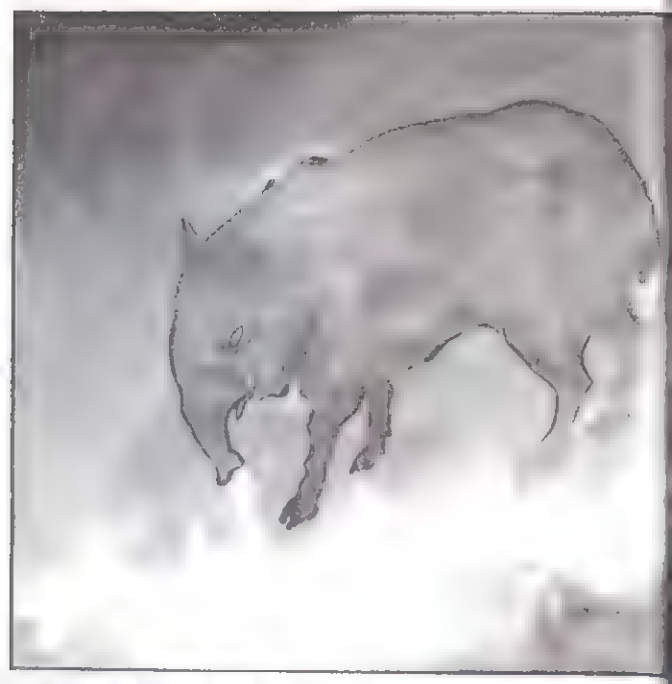
PAPAAAAAA!

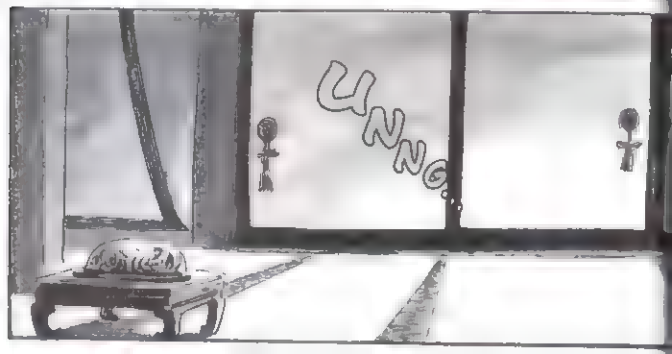

NO, SIR!
NO! ME
TAUGHT
ME

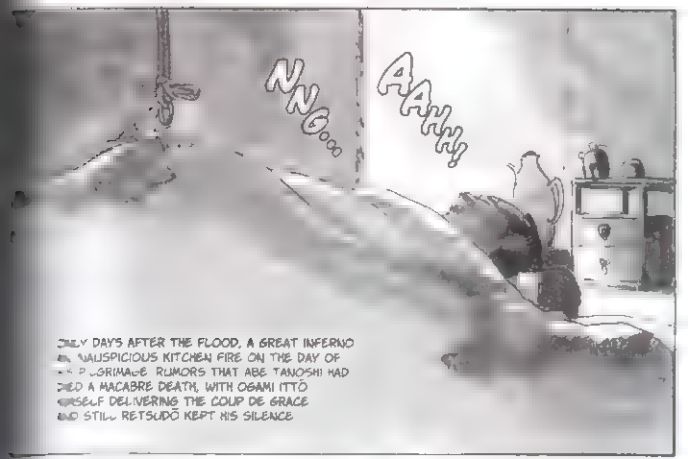

ZŌBURŌ-
GORŌSHICHI,
IMADO-YAKI
BAKER
ŌGAMI
ITTŌ, AND
DAIGORO
ŌGAMI-
SAMA. THE
KAISHAKUNIN?!
I'M GOING TO
MAKE GREAT ROOF
TILES, KID! IMADO-YAKI
THAT CAN STOP ANY FIRE,
SHISHŪ, KID! I'M BAKING IT
RIGHT INTO THEM. .
THANKS TO YOU.

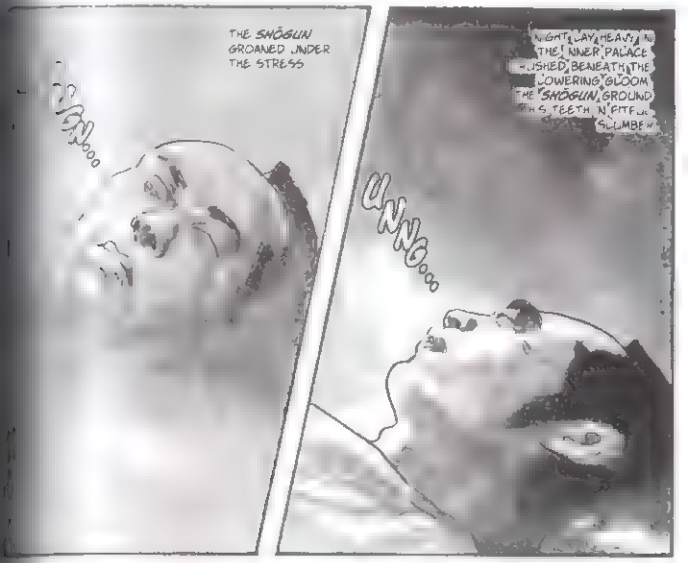
the hundred and thirty-fourth

For Whom To Die

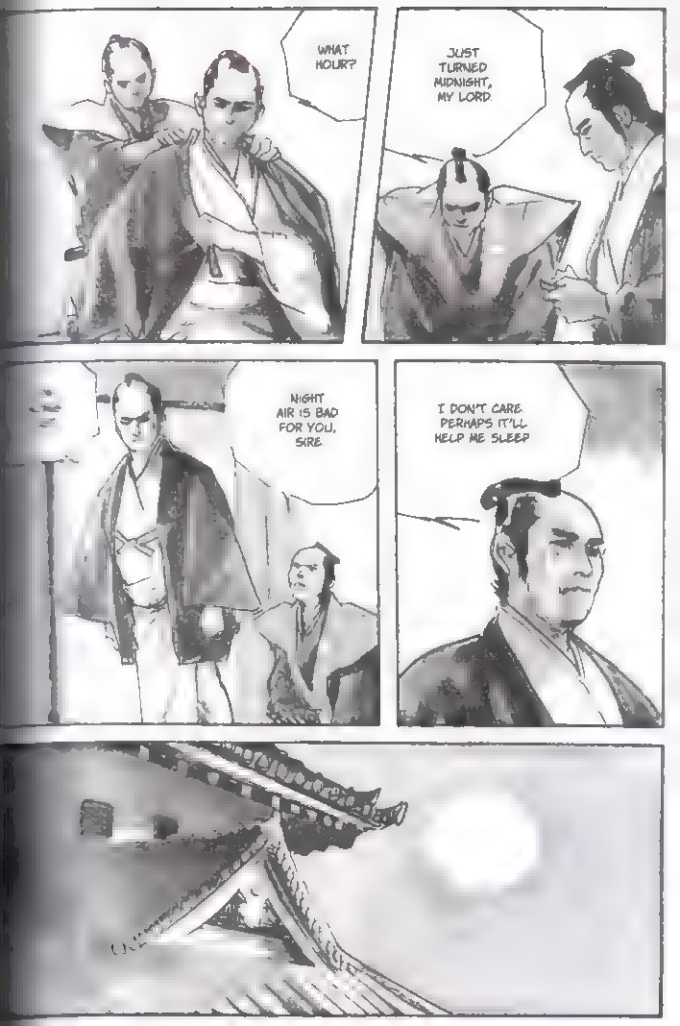


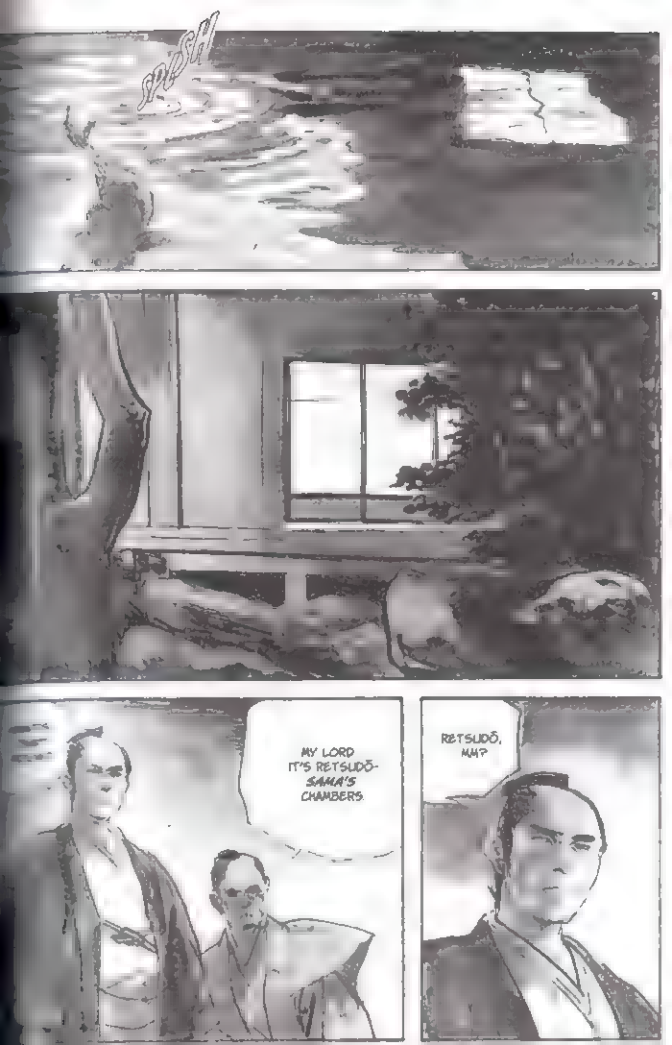

UNNG...

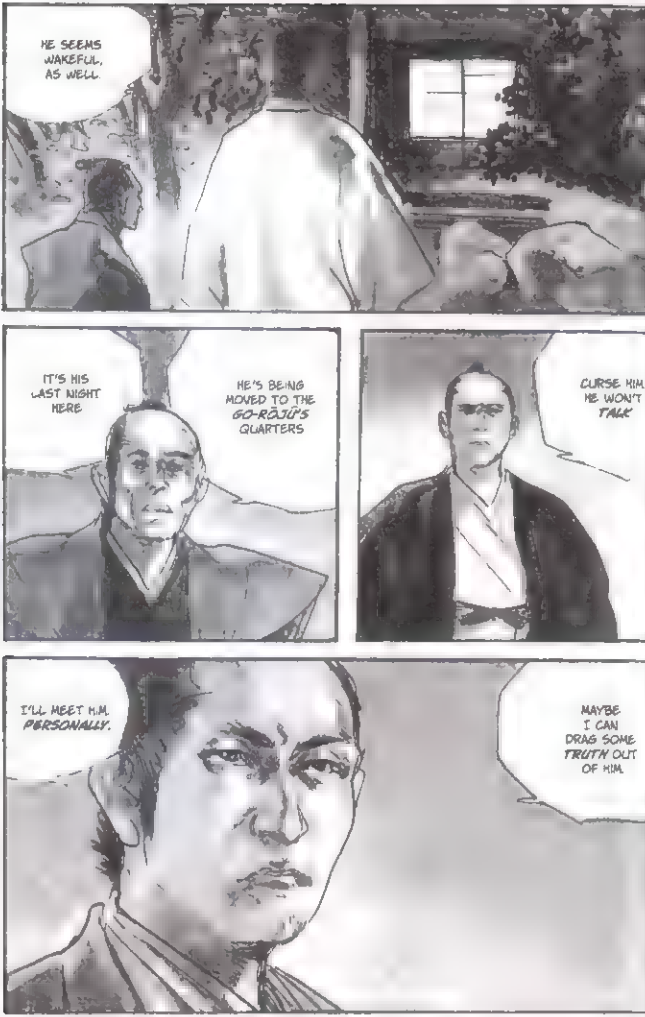

NNGooo
AAHHH
DAYS AFTER THE FLOOD, A GREAT INFERNO
AUSPICIOUS KITCHEN FIRE ON THE DAY OF
PILGRIMAGE RUMORS THAT ABE TANOSHI HAD
DIED A MACABRE DEATH, WITH OGAMI ITTŌ
HIMSELF DELIVERING THE COUP DE GRACE
AND STILL RETSUDŌ KEPT HIS SILENCE

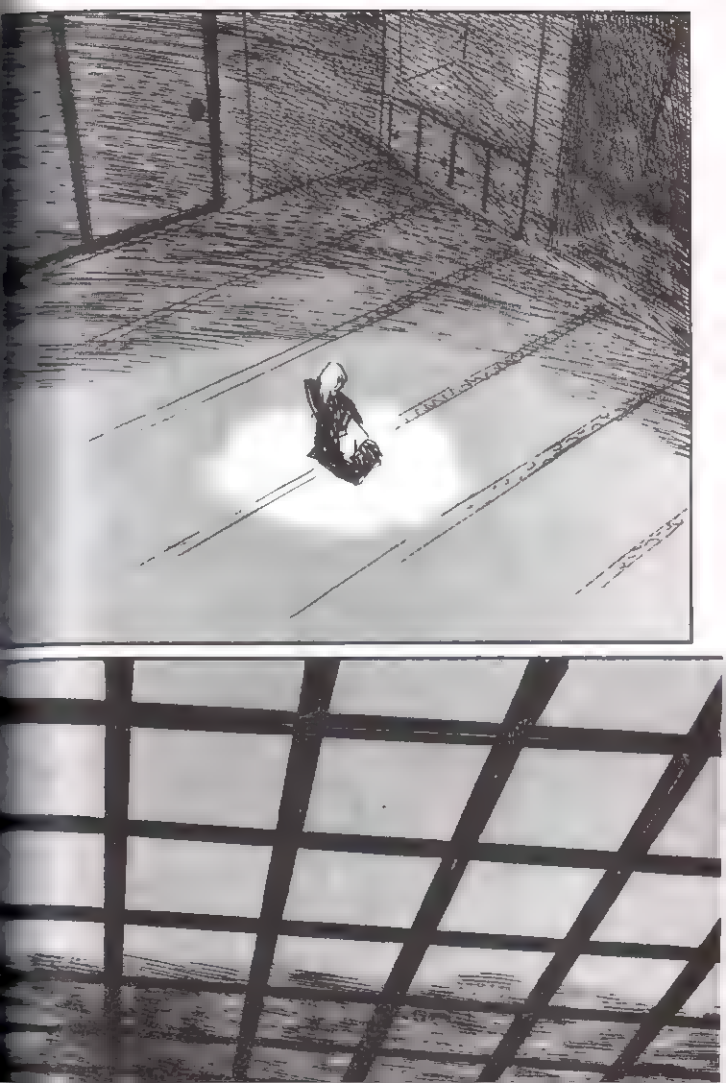

THE SHŌGUN GROANED UNDER THE STRESS
UNNGooo
UNNGooo
NIGHT LAY HEAVY IN THE INNER PALACE HUSHED BENEATH THE LOWERING GLOOM THE SHŌGUN GROUND HIS TEETH IN FITFUL SLUMBER

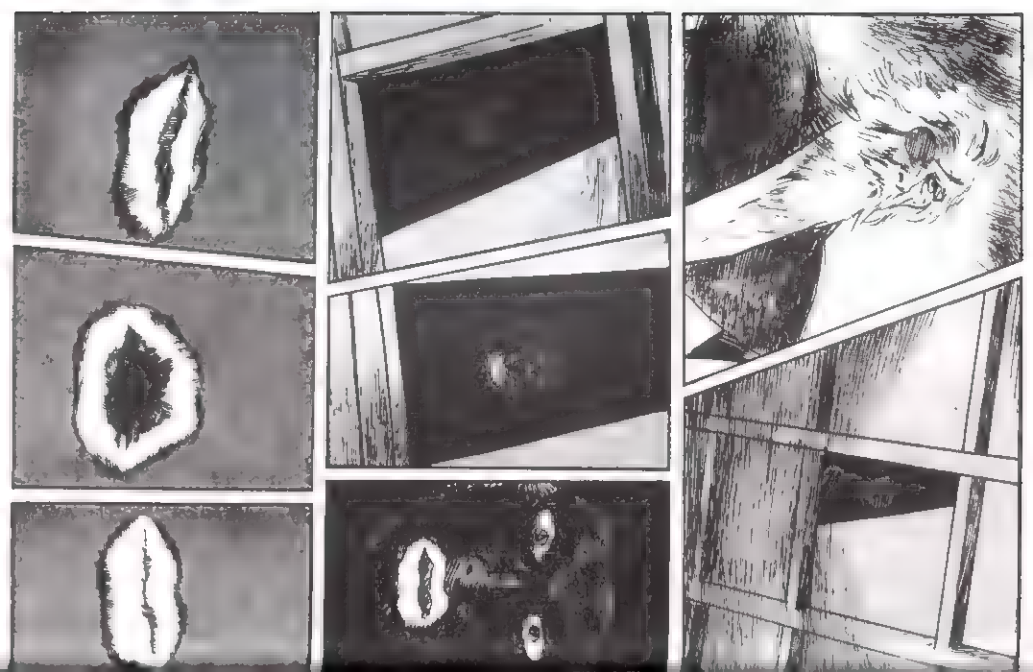
KCCH KCCH KRRK
MY LORD ?
MY LORD!
CCCH KCCH
WHAT AILS MY LIEGE?
HRM ? A DREAM?


WHAT HOUR?
JUST TURNED MIDNIGHT, MY LORD.
NIGHT AIR IS BAD FOR YOU, SIRE.
I DON'T CARE. PERHAPS IT'LL HELP ME SLEEP

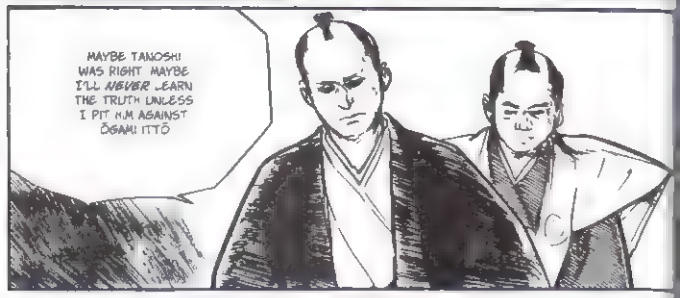

SPLASH!
MY LORD IT'S RETSUDŌ-SAMA'S CHAMBERS
RETSUDŌ, MM?


HE SEEMS WAKEFUL, AS WELL.
IT'S HIS LAST NIGHT HERE
HE'S BEING MOVED TO THE GO-RŌJŪ'S QUARTERS
CURSE HIM. HE WON'T TALK
I'LL MEET H.M. PERSONALLY.
MAYBE I CAN DRAG SOME TRUTH OUT OF H.M.

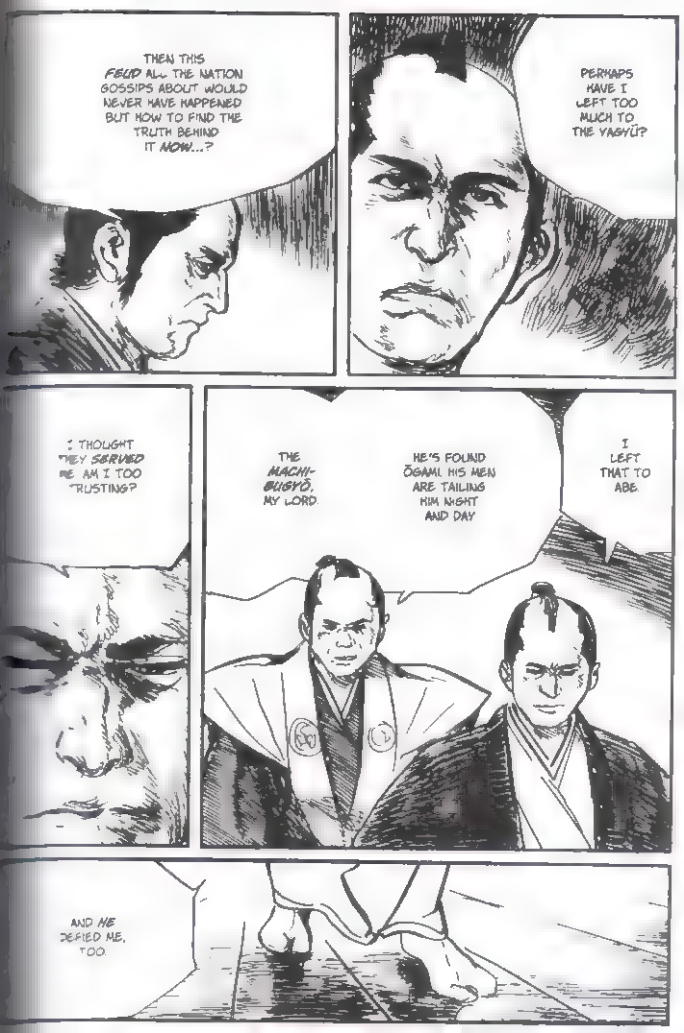




RATEGY
CCESSFUL
STA SMOKE
SHŌGUN AWAKE
ATED
"NOW WALKING IN GARDEN
"COMING"

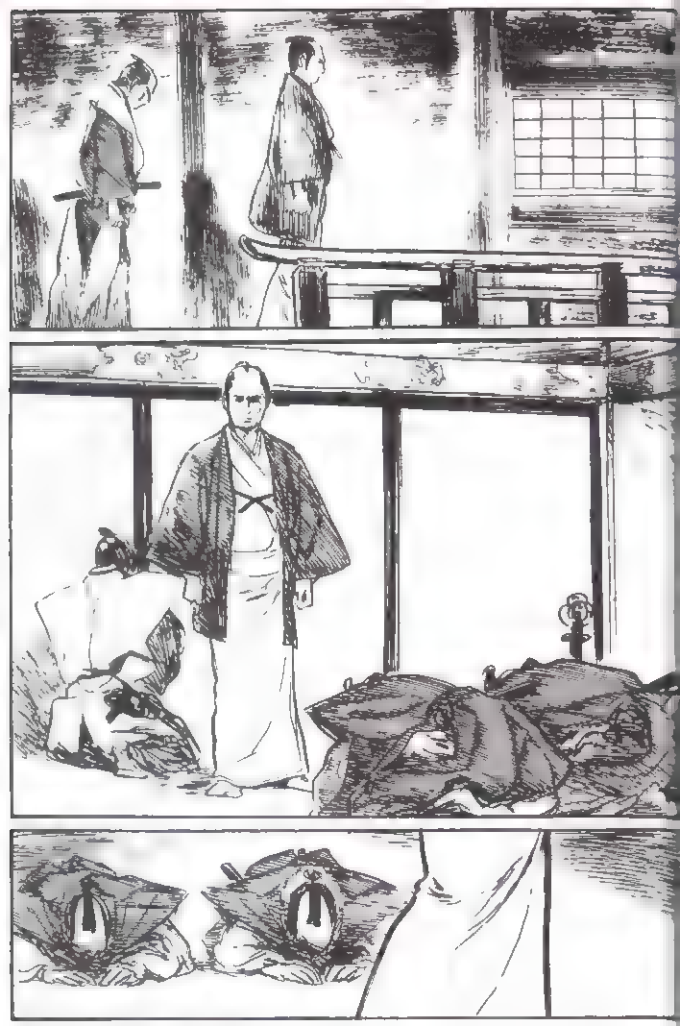

MAYBE TANOSHI WAS RIGHT. MAYBE I'LL *NEVER* LEARN THE TRUTH UNLESS I PIT HIM AGAINST ŌGAMI ITTŌ

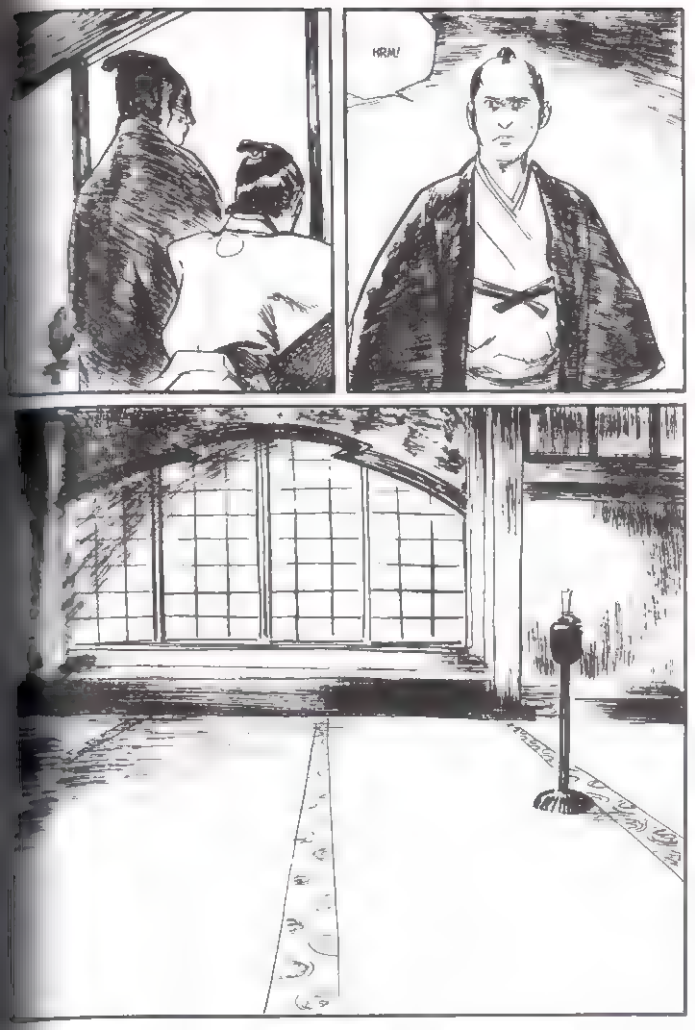
I LET RETSUDŌ HAVE HIS WAY FOUR YEARS AGO, BUT MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE INTERVENED
ŌGAMI. THAT WHOLE SITUATION DOESN'T SIT RIGHT


THEN THIS FEUD ALL THE NATION GOSSIPS ABOUT WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED BUT HOW TO FIND THE TRUTH BEHIND IT NOW...?
PERHAPS HAVE I LEFT TOO MUCH TO THE YASYŪ?
I THOUGHT THEY SERVED ME. AM I TOO TRUSTING?
THE MACHI-BUGYŌ, MY LORD
HE'S FOUND ŌGAMI. HIS MEN ARE TAILING HIM NIGHT AND DAY
I LEFT THAT TO ABE.
AND HE DEFIED ME, TOO.

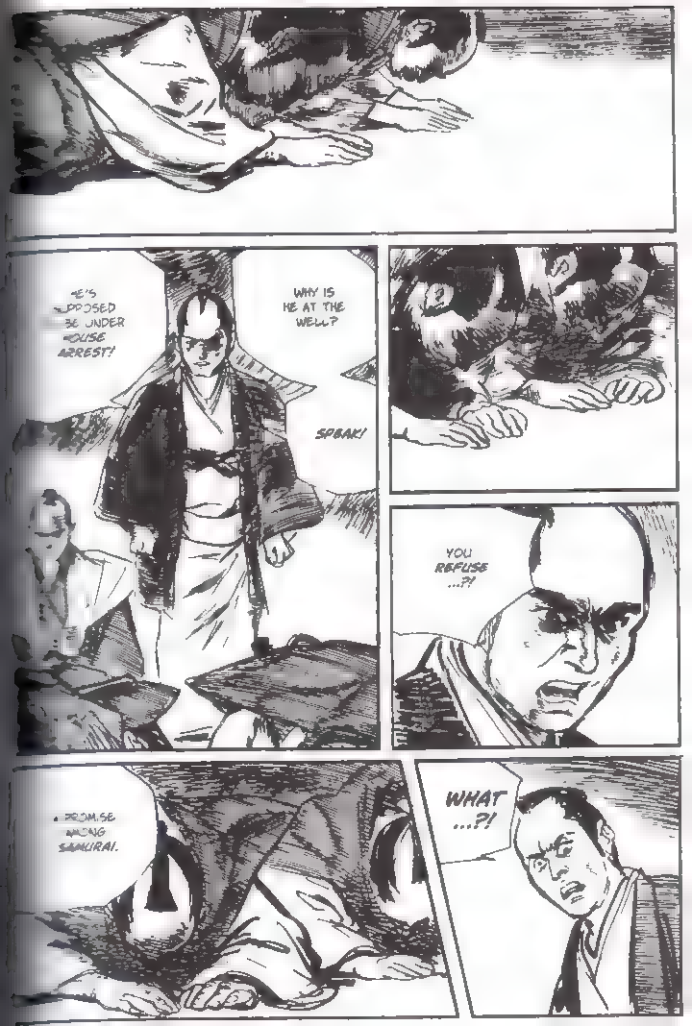
RETSUDŌ, ITTŌ, TANOSHI.
WITH TANOSHI GONE, JUST TWO LEFT SHOULD I SUMMON THEM *BOTH*? GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT?
HMPH. FIGHTING A *PRIVATE FEUD!*
THEY'RE *BOTH* DISLOYAL! I SHOULD DEAL WITH THEM *HARSHLY*

FWIP

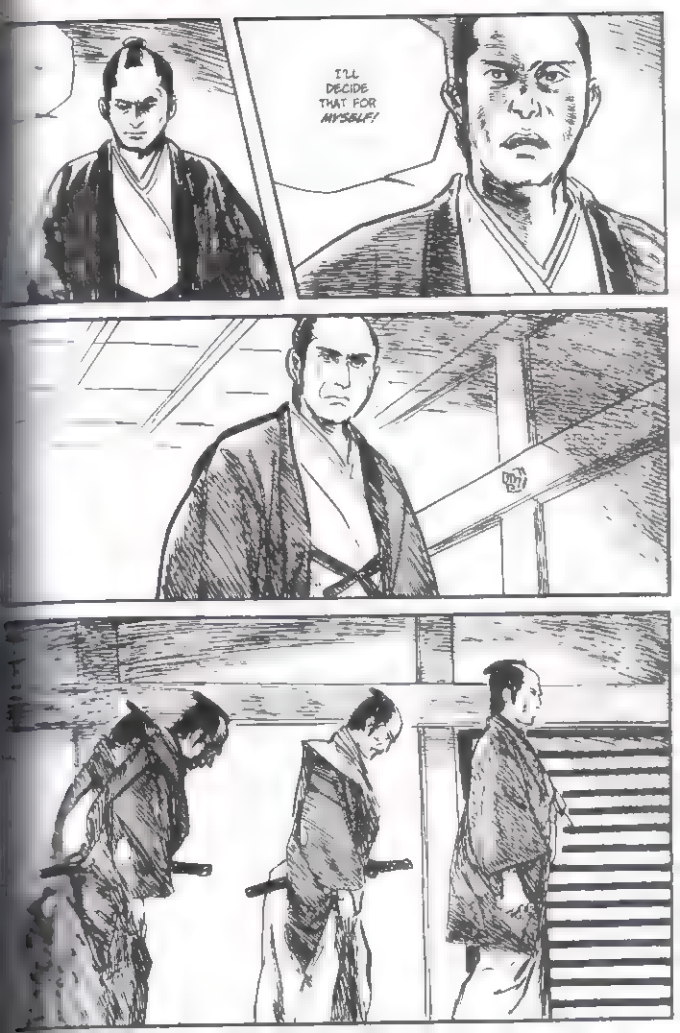



HRM!

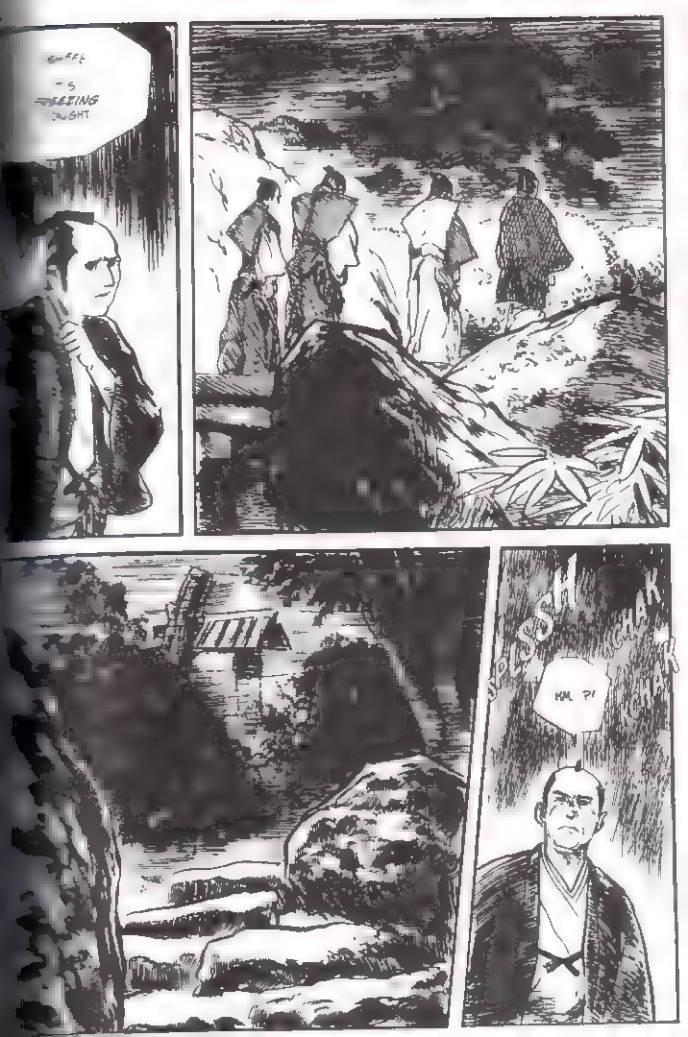
WHERE'S RETSUDŌ?
WHERE DID HE GO?!
MY LORD.
[illegible] YOU'RE HIS GUARDS!
HE IS AT THE WELL BY THE NAGAYA GATE, MY LORD
WHAT'S HE DOING THERE?!


HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE UNDER HOUSE ARREST!
WHY IS HE AT THE WELL?
SPEAK!
YOU REFUSE ...?!
A PROMISE AMONG SAMURAI.
WHAT ...?!

THEN...
THEN YOU DO KNOW AND STILL?!
COME, MEN. TELL US!
WE SWORE NOT TO SPEAK.
WE KNOW WE VIOLATE OUR DUTY DEATH IS OUR JUST REWARD.
HRMM.
ONE WORD MY LORD. THEN YOU'LL UNDERSTAND. RETSUDŌ-SAMA VISITS THE WELL EVERY NIGHT, BUT NOT IN DEFIANCE OF SHIDŌ. RATHER, HE'S AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL BUSHI!


I'LL DECIDE THAT FOR MYSELF!

YOUR TALK OF SHIDŌ HAS INTRIGUED ME. WE SHALL VISIT THE WELL. BUT IF YOU'VE LIED BEWARE!
MY LORD!
SNIFF
KUH-CHOO!
MY LIEGE, THE NIGHT AIR AS I FEARED..
I'M FINE!
KUH-CHOO!


-FF
-S
FLEEING
SIGHT
SSSH
CHAK
CHAK
HM. ?!

KCHAK
KCHAK
KCHAK
KCHAK
SPLOSH!!

THOUGH IT DESTROY ME, LET ME BUILD A FIRM FOUNDATION!
MY OWN FATE MEANS NOTHING! LET ME PROTECT THE TOKUGAWA!
KCHAK
KCHAK
KCHAK

WE'VE GUARDED THE RYUEI FOR GENERATIONS!
IN A WORLD GONE SOFT, WE STAND FALSELY ACCUSED!
BUT FOR MY LORD, I SHALL NOT FEAR DEATH! LET ME BE A DEMON GUARDING HIS CLAN FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE!

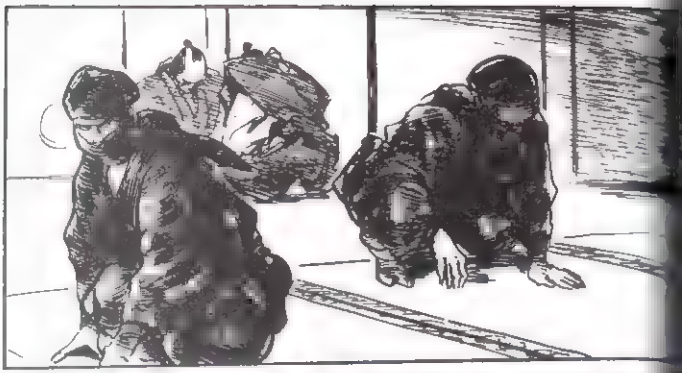
SPLASH
ETERNAL GLORY TO MY LORD!
NNK
.....

FORGIVE ME, MY LORD FORGIVE ME FOR LURING YOU HERE WITH TRICKERY
YET I SPOKE THE TRUTH WITHOUT THE YAGYU THERE IS NO TOKUGAWA I KNOW IT IN MY BONES
AS THE TOKUGAWA GO, SO GO THE YAGYU. PLEASE UNDERSTAND

WAS IT TRUE PURITY
OR UNBRIDLED CONFIDENCE?
EITHER WAY, HIS STRATAGEM
SUCCESSFUL, THE OLD TIGER
RETURNED TO THE FRAY...
I RETURN
HOME!
TOMORROW!

GOOD WORK

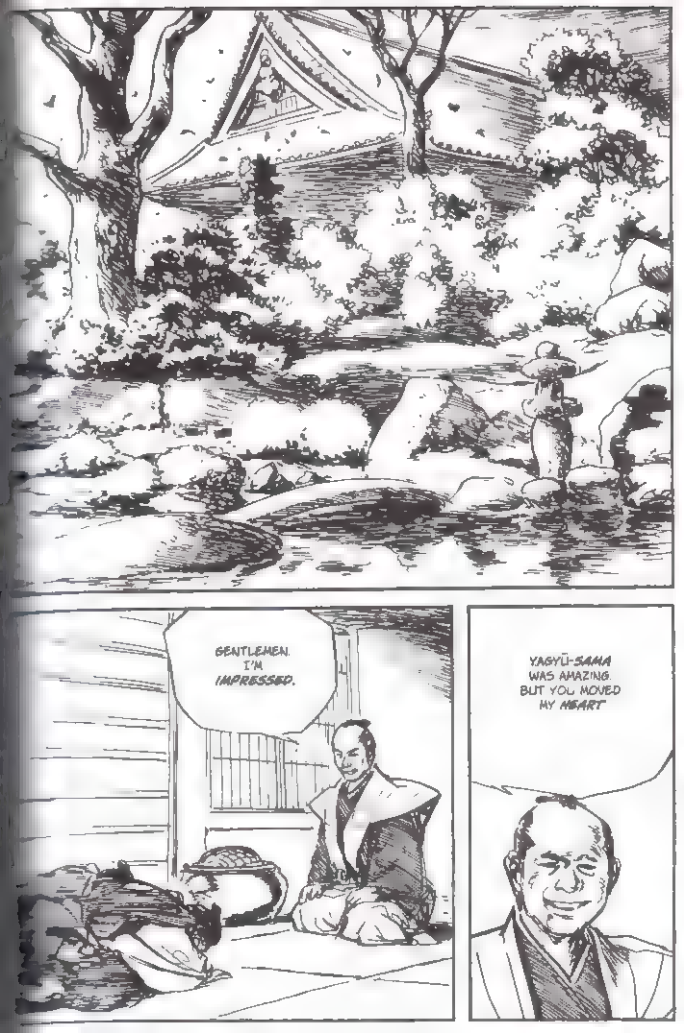
SHKKK



READY?
READY

HUM...HUH...
HAH-CHOO!
BRRR! IT'S COLD
YEAH. FREEZING!
HUH...?
WHAT'S WRONG?
I THOUGHT NAW JUST DREAMING

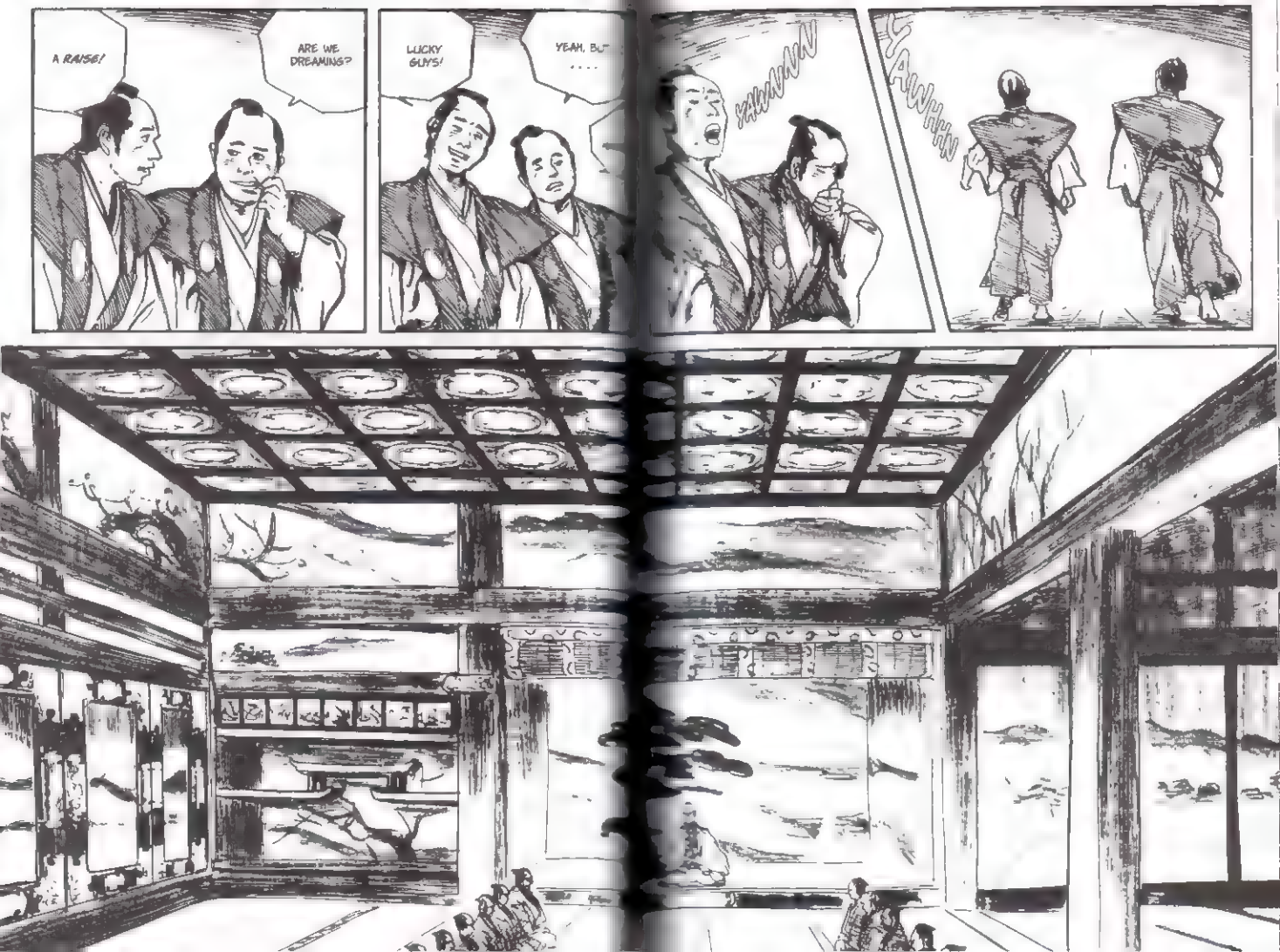
HAHH-
CHOO!
HMM?


GENTLEMEN, I'M *IMPRESSED.*
YAGYŪ-*SAMA* WAS AMAZING. BUT YOU MOVED MY *HEART*

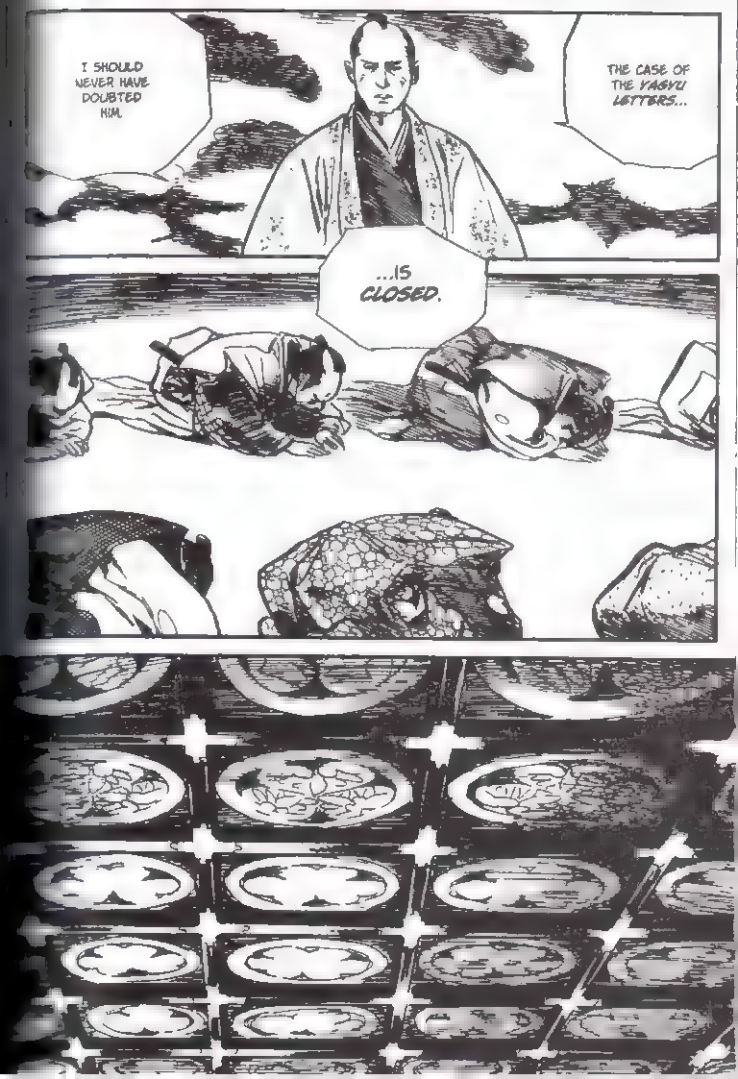
OUR LORD WAS *VERY* PLEASED.
RETSUDÔ IS *RETSUDÔ* BUT YOU *BUARDS!*
READY TO *DIE* FOR BUSHI!
OUR LORD SAID YOU WERE *SPLENDID*
EH.. ?!
SIR, I DON'T ?
HOH! *STILL* KEEPING HIS SECRET?
A *SAMURAI'S* PROMISE, RIGHT?! EXCELLENT! EXPECT A *RAISE*, MEN.

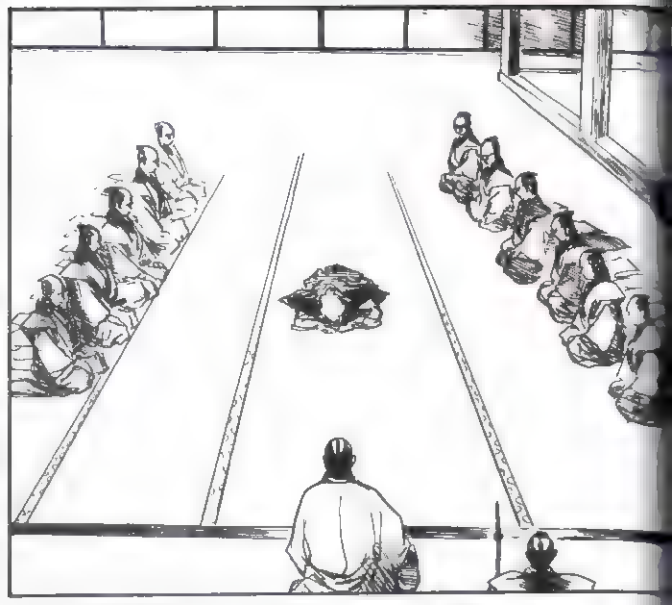
WELL DONE SO GET SOME REST
ODD THEIR BEARING . ALMOST LIKE NIGHT AND DAY
IT WAS DARK IN THERE. HARD TO SEE.
BUT IT WAS THEIR VOICES. . HRM.
SO LET BE IT!
JUST LET IT GO. DOUBT NOT SUCH HONOR IN THESE DAYS!
IS HE LOSING IT .?
YEAH. WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

A RAISE!
ARE WE DREAMING?
LUCKY GUYS!
YEAH, BU-
....

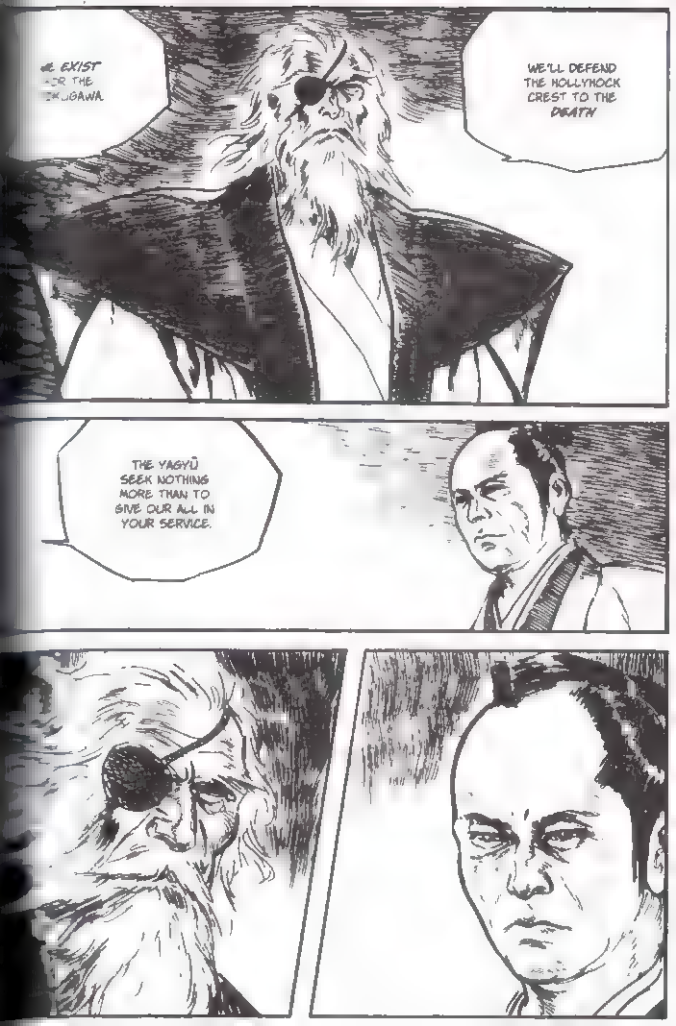

A RAISE!
ARE WE DREAMING?
LUCKY GUYS!
YEAH, BUT . . . .
YAWWN
YAWHHN

YAWWWN
YAWHHN


I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DOUBTED HIM.
THE CASE OF THE YAGYU LETTERS...
...IS CLOSED.

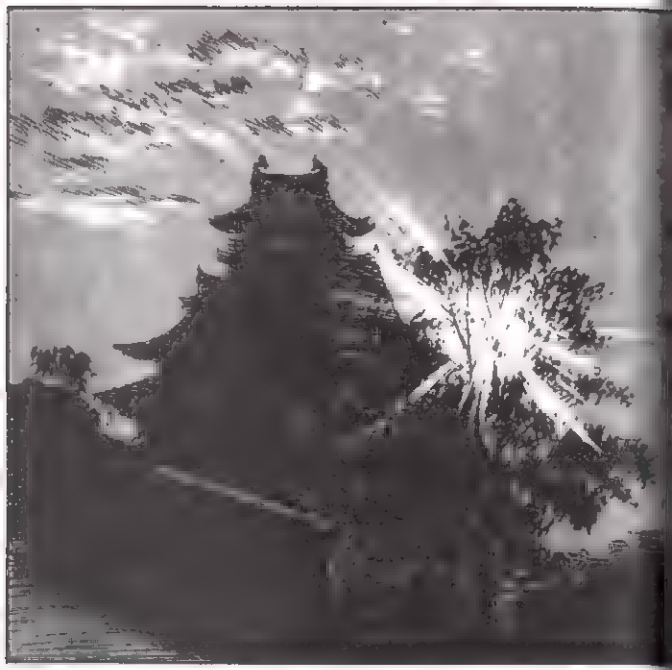


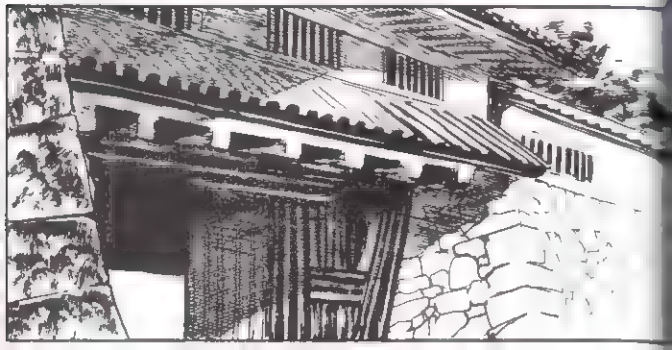
I'M OVERJOYED TO REGAIN MY LORD'S TRUST, AND ALLA- THE BAKKAKU'S SUSPICION.

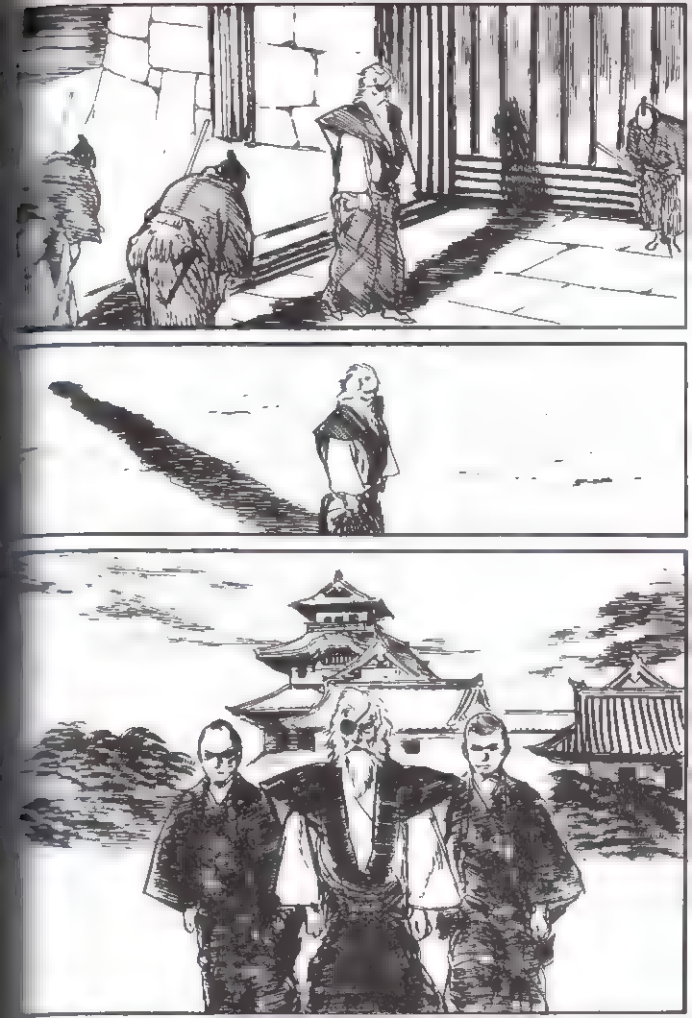

...EXIST
...OR THE
...KUGAWA.
WE'LL DEFEND THE HOLLYHOCK CREST TO THE DEATH
THE YAGYŪ SEEK NOTHING MORE THAN TO GIVE OUR ALL IN YOUR SERVICE.

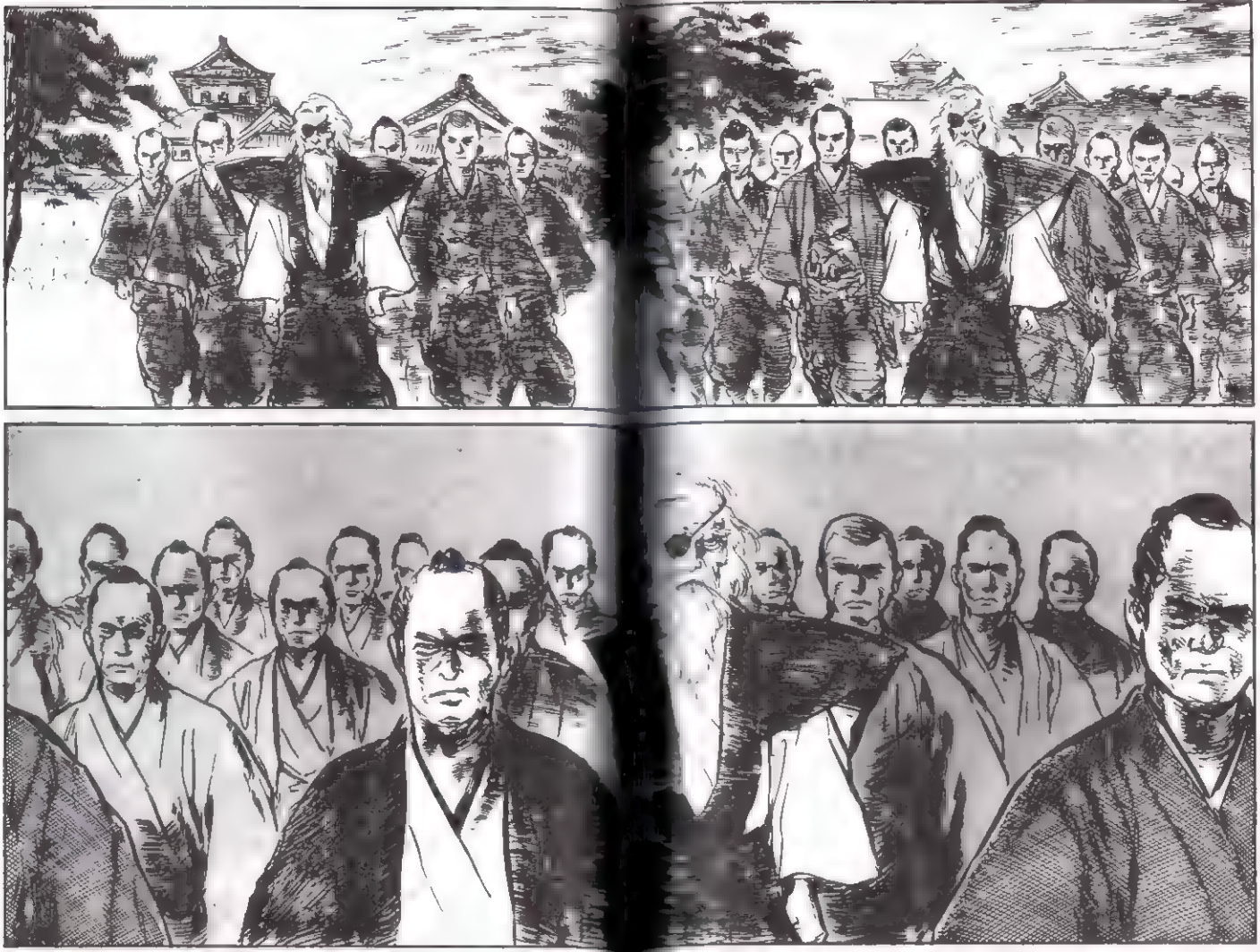
FORGIVE ME, RETSUDŌ
MY LORD !
WORDS TOO GRACIOUS FOR THESE OLD BONES
YOU'VE SAT ON THORNY GROUND HERE, RETSUDŌ
MY LORD, THOUGH HE BE OLD RETSUDŌ WIELDS HIS SWORD FOR THE RYŪGI

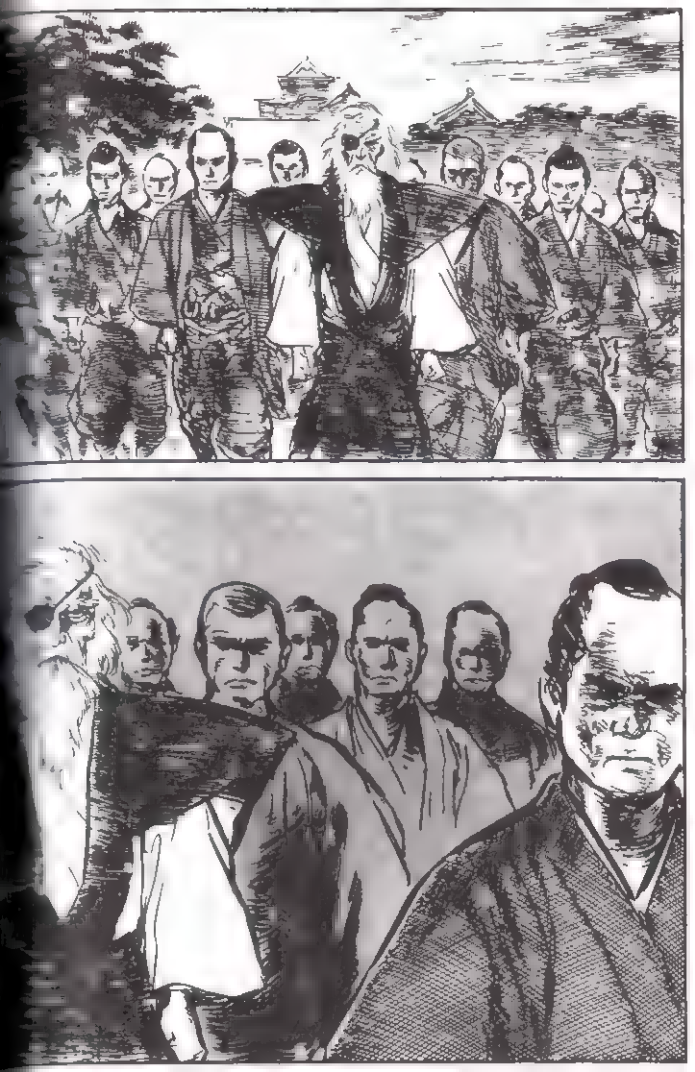
TRUE, TOO TRUE!
HEH HEH.
YOU WIN AGAIN! HA HA HA..!





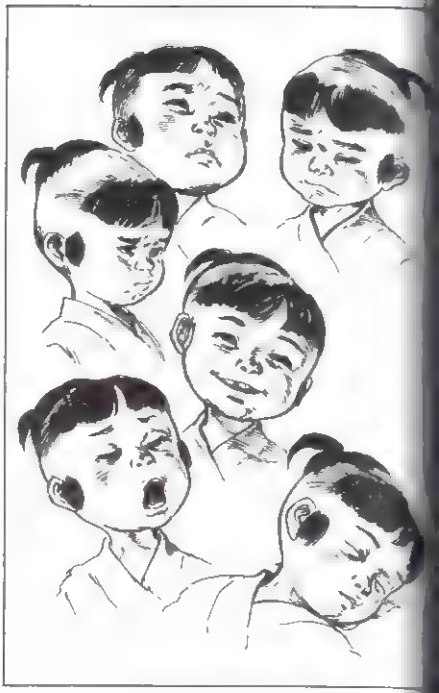


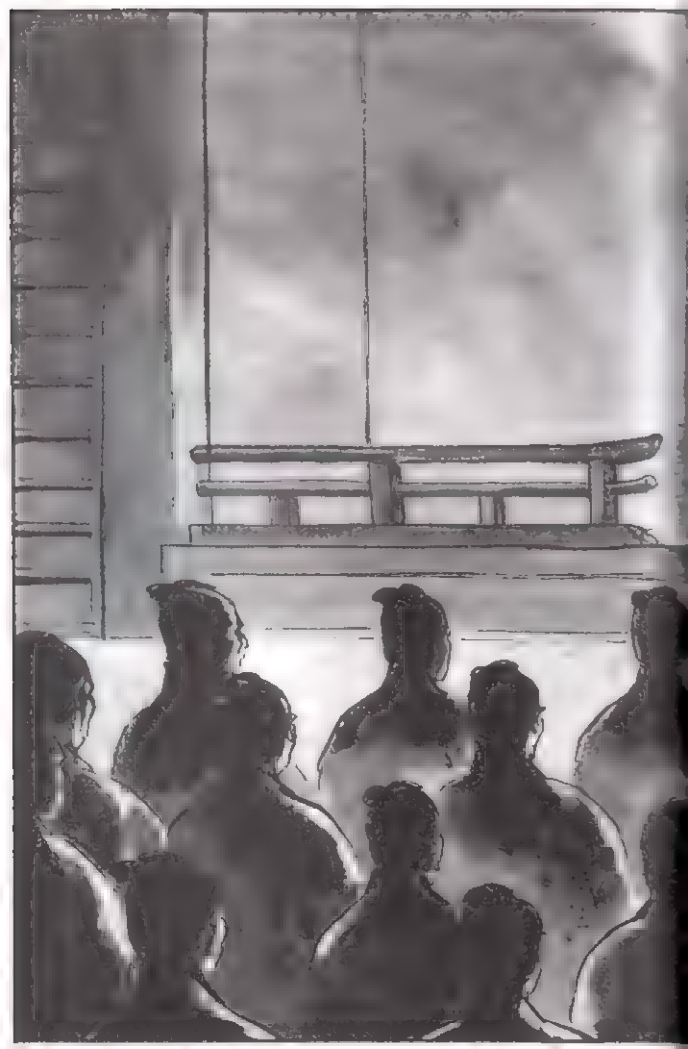




the hundred and thirty-fifth

Way of the Warrior, Way of Man





YOU'VE COME FAR MY THANKS.
OYAMADA SHUME KAWASOE. THIRD GENERATION.
I ONCE MET YOUR FATHER, KAGEYU.

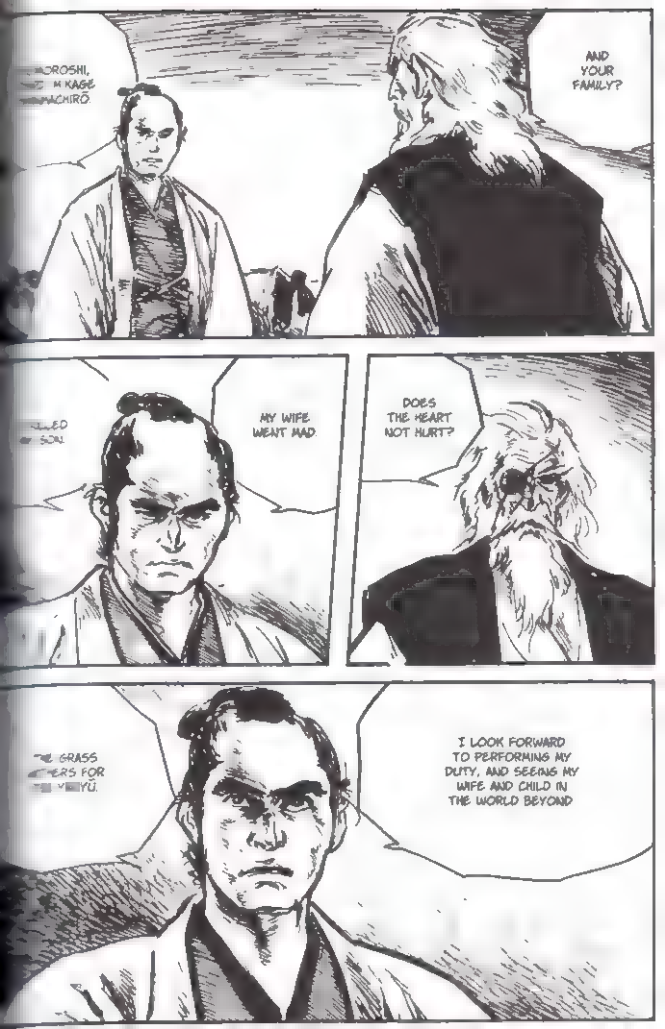
YOU'VE COME FAR, MY THANKS.
OYAMADA SHUME KAWASOE. THIRD GENERATION.
I ONCE MET YOUR FATHER, KASEYU.
HE CHOSE DEATH BY FIRE
HRMM.
YOU WERE BRILLIANT IN THE CASTLE. YOUR FATHER'S EQUAL.
NO GREATER JOY, SIR!

'E CHOSE DEATH BY FIRE
HRMM.
YOU WERE BRILLIANT IN THE CASTLE. YOUR FATHER'S EQUAL.
NO GREATER JOY, SIR!

TATEYAMA, FOURTH SEASON, NAKODERA BUSHŌ
YES, THE OLD CLIFF TEMPLE..
BUSHŌ!
SIR!
YOU, TOO. EXEMPLARY!
I'M HONORED SIR

K. NUMATA
AV FIFTH
ERATION!
NADŌ
SHINTARŌ
ERE'S YOUR
ER? LIKON,
SN'T IT?
I. .DON'T
KNOW, SIR.
I WENT
ON AHEAD
LED?
YES, SIR.
I THINK
TO DECEIVE
THE MAN...
HE.
.HE
LET THEM
KILL HIM.

HOW OLD, SHINTARŌ?
TWELVE! BUT GO-SHIHAI-SAMA!
I'VE LEARNED EVERYTHING TEST ME IF YOU-
I DON'T DOUBT YOU.
BUT MAKE THOSE TEARS YOUR LAST

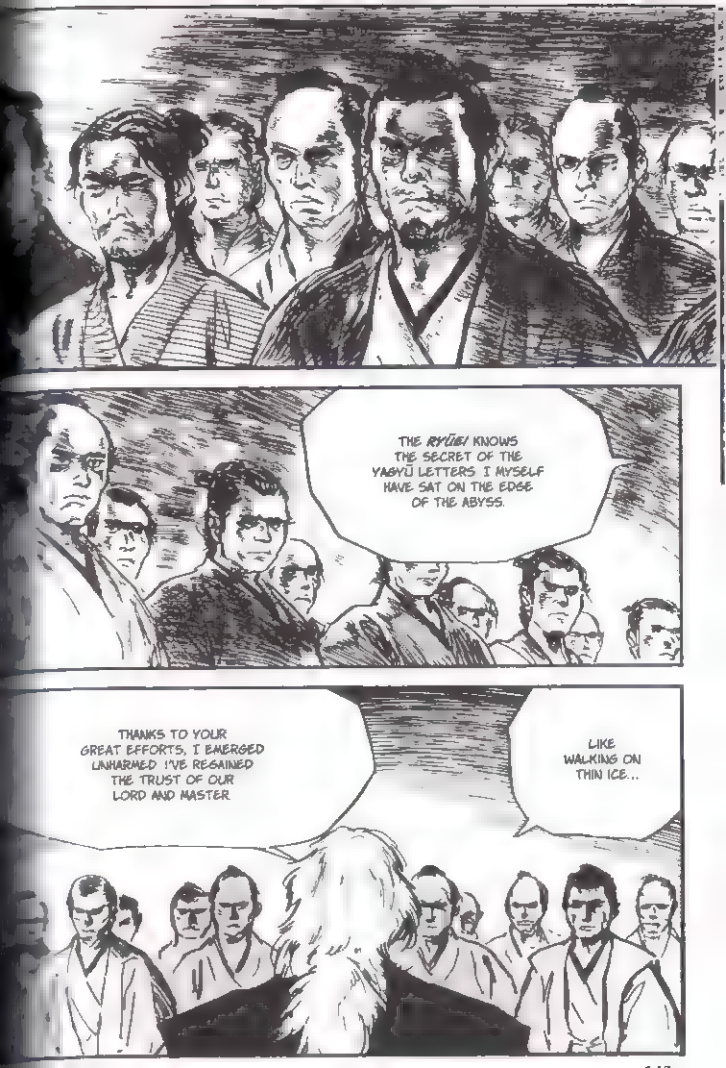

OROSHI,
MKAGE
MACHIRŌ
AND
YOUR
FAMILY?
LLED
SOU
MY WIFE
WENT MAD
DOES
THE HEART
NOT HURT?
GRASS
ERS FOR
YŪ.
I LOOK FORWARD
TO PERFORMING MY
DUTY, AND SEEING MY
WIFE AND CHILD IN
THE WORLD BEYOND

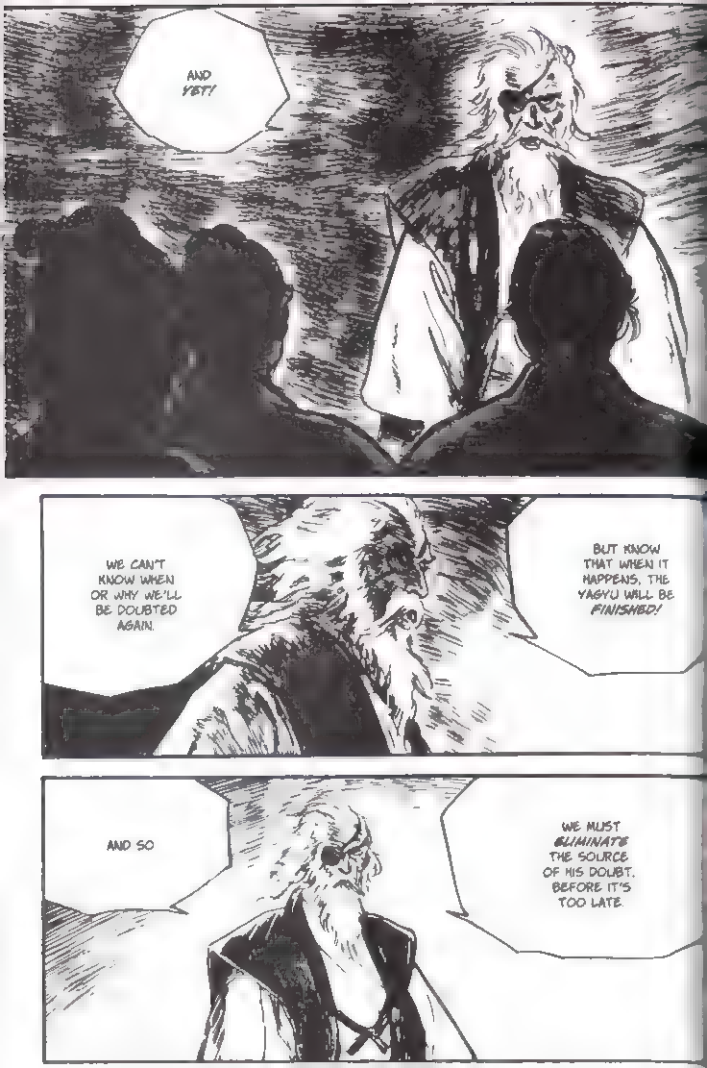
WELL SPOKEN, MIKASE

RAISE YOUR HEADS.

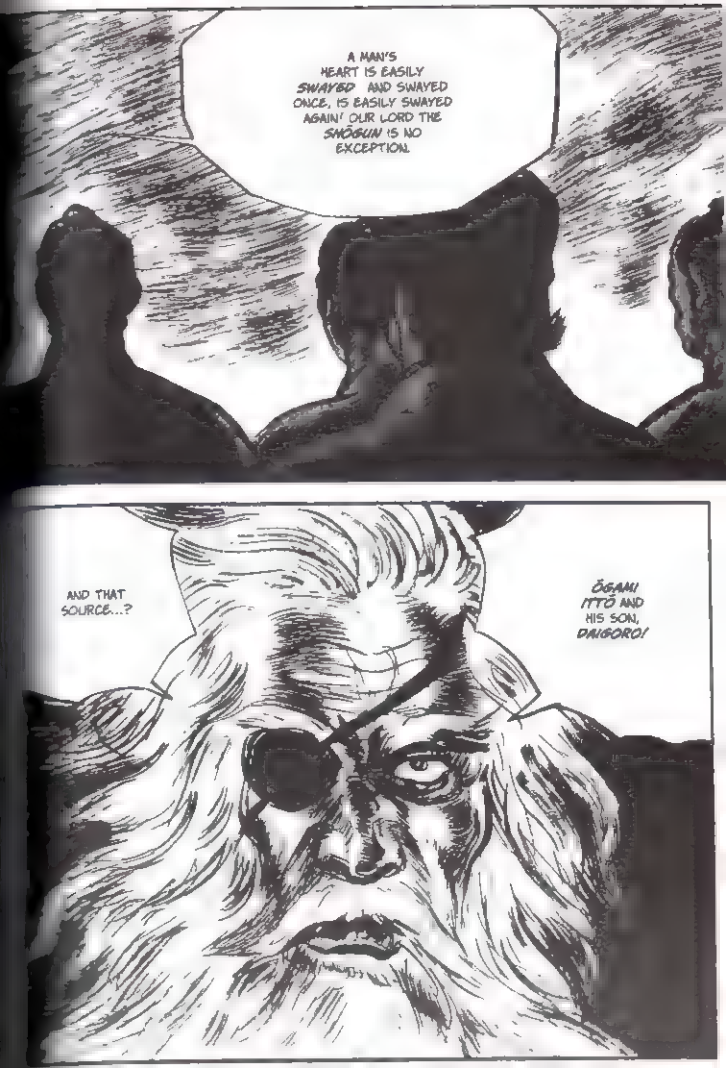
I DIDN'T SUMMON YOU WITH WOLF FIRE *LIGHTLY*
OUR FOUNDATIONS ARE *CRUMBLING*

I DIDN'T SUMMON YOU WITH WOLF FIRE *LIGHTLY*
THE *RYŪBI* KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE YAGYŪ LETTERS. I MYSELF HAVE SAT ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS.
OUR FOUNDATIONS ARE *CRUMBLING*
THANKS TO YOUR GREAT EFFORTS, I EMERGED UNHARMED. I'VE RE-GAINED THE TRUST OF OUR LORD AND MASTER.
LIKE WALKING ON THIN ICE..


THE RYŪSEI KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE YAGYŪ LETTERS I MYSELF HAVE SAT ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS.
THANKS TO YOUR GREAT EFFORTS, I EMERGED UNHARMED. I'VE REGAINED THE TRUST OF OUR LORD AND MASTER
LIKE WALKING ON THIN ICE...


AND YET!
WE CAN'T KNOW WHEN OR WHY WE'LL BE DOUBTED AGAIN.
BUT KNOW THAT WHEN IT HAPPENS, THE YAGYU WILL BE FINISHED!
AND SO
WE MUST ELIMINATE THE SOURCE OF HIS DOUBT. BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

AND YET!
A MAN'S HEART IS EASILY SWAYED AND SWAYED ONCE, IS EASILY SWAYED AGAIN! OUR LORD THE SHŌGUN IS NO EXCEPTION.
WE CAN'T KNOW WHEN OR WHY WE'LL BE DOUBTED AGAIN.
BUT KNOW THAT WHEN IT HAPPENS, THE YAGYŪ WILL BE FINISHED!
AND SO
WE MUST ELIMINATE THE SOURCE OF HIS DOUBT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
AND THAT SOURCE. ?
ŌGAMI ITTŌ AND HIS SON, DAIGORO!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AND THAT SOURCE...?
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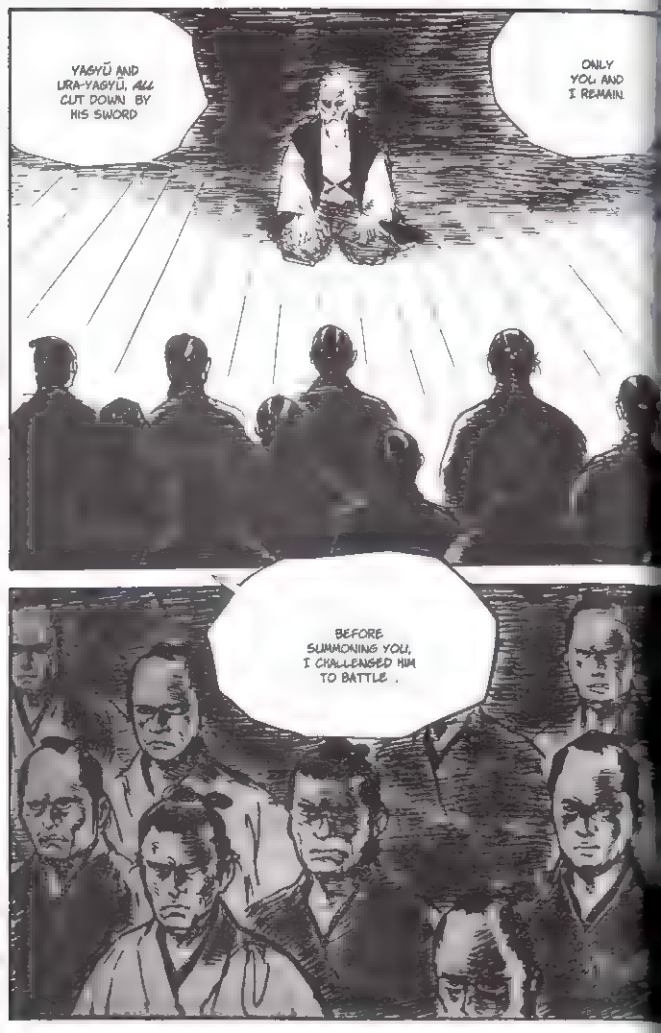
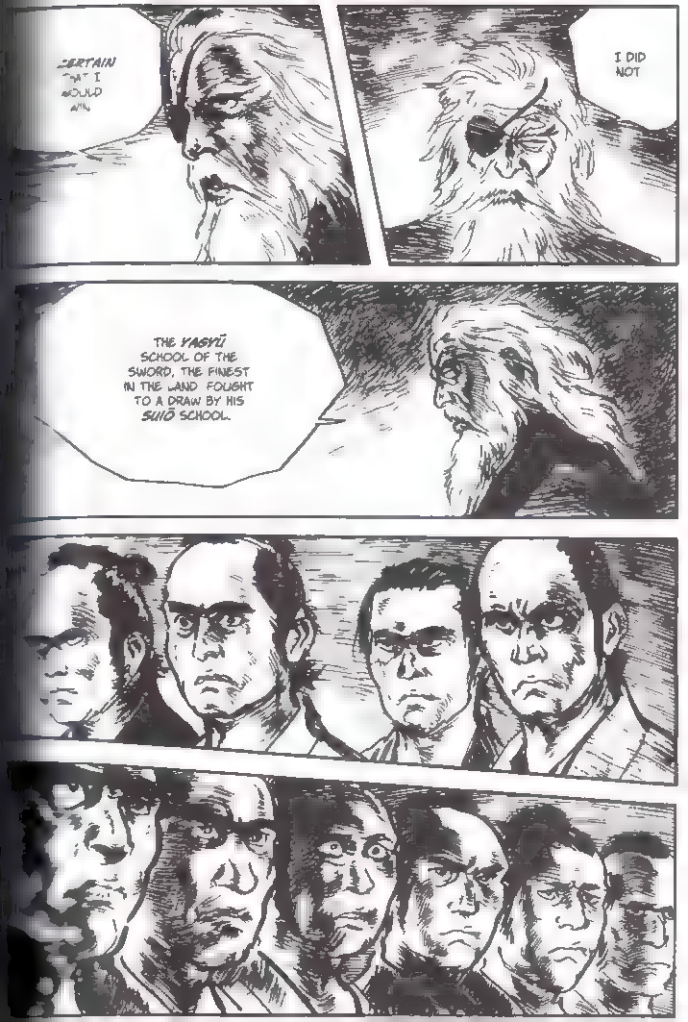
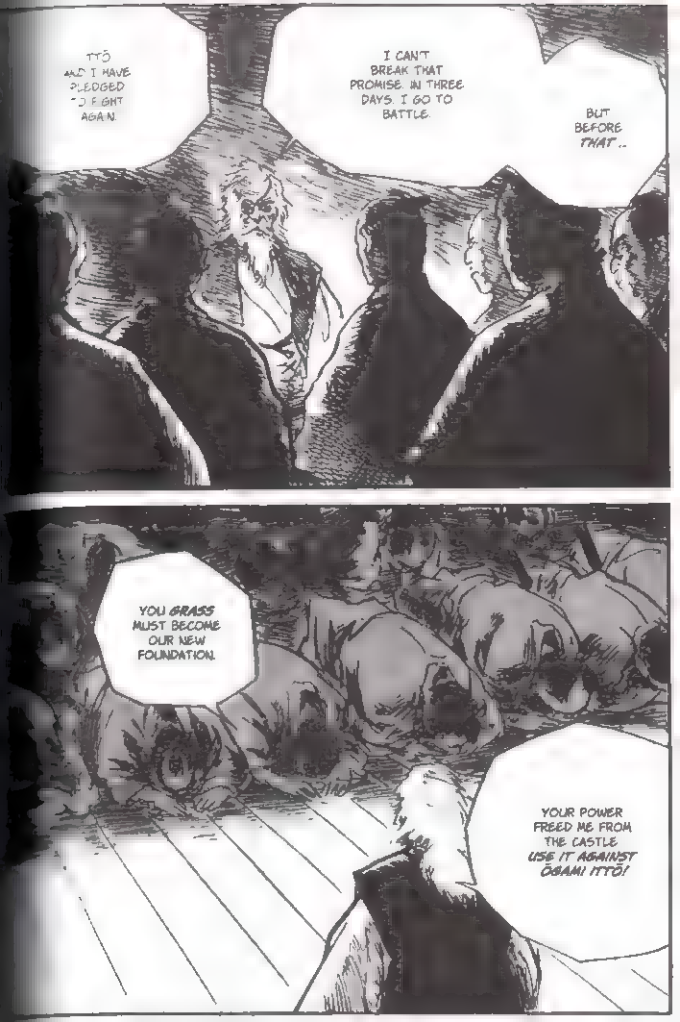
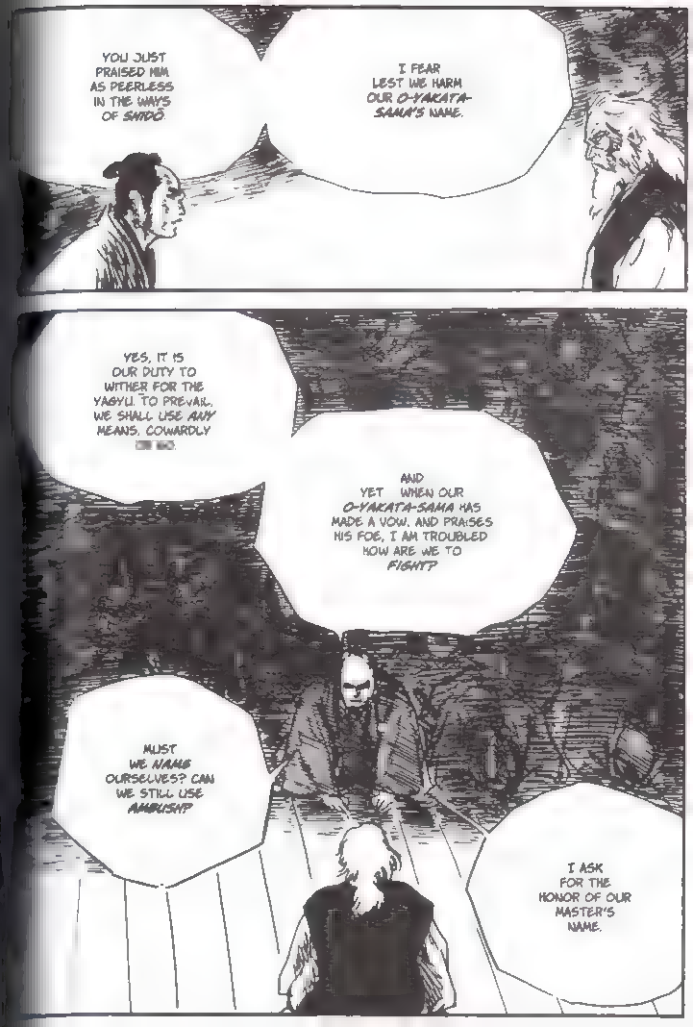

YAGYŪ AND URA-YAGYŪ, ALL CUT DOWN BY HIS SWORD
ONLY YOU AND I REMAIN
BEFORE SUMMONING YOU, I CHALLENGED HIM TO BATTLE .


CERTAIN THAT I WOULD WIN.
I DID NOT
THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL OF THE SWORD, THE FINEST IN THE LAND FOUGHT TO A DRAW BY HIS SHIŌ SCHOOL.

OGAM HAS NO PEER AND AGE DRAGS ME DOWN
HIS SHIDO BEYOND COMPARE
A SHAME TO TAKE SUCH A LIFE.
AND YE
WE MUST BURY HIM! WE MUST RE-PLANT THE GREAT TREE OF THE YAGYŪ FOR ALL TIME!
WE LIVE THROUGH THE TOKUGAWA THE TOKUGAWA LIVE THROUGH US. RESTORING THE WAY OF THE YAGYŪ RESTORES THE WAY OF THE TOKUGAWA AND THE WAY OF THE TOKUGAWA IS THE WAY OF SHIDŌ ITSELF!


ITTŌ
AND I HAVE PLEDGED TO FIGHT AGAIN
I CAN'T BREAK THAT PROMISE IN THREE DAYS I GO TO BATTLE
BUT BEFORE THAT..
YOU GRASS MUST BECOME OUR NEW FOUNDATION
YOUR POWER FREED ME FROM THE CASTLE USE IT AGAINST ŌBAMI ITTŌ!

THIS CURSE AT LAST!
A QUESTION, SIR!
WHAT IT IS IT, MIKAGE?
IN ALL DEFERENCE.
IF OUR O-KATA-SAMA PLEDGED BATTLE DOES NOT THE SOUL OF SHIDŌ DEMAND HE FIGHT ALONE?
IF WE GRASS ATTACK ŌSAMI FIRST, WILL HE NOT POINT AND CALL YOU COWARD?

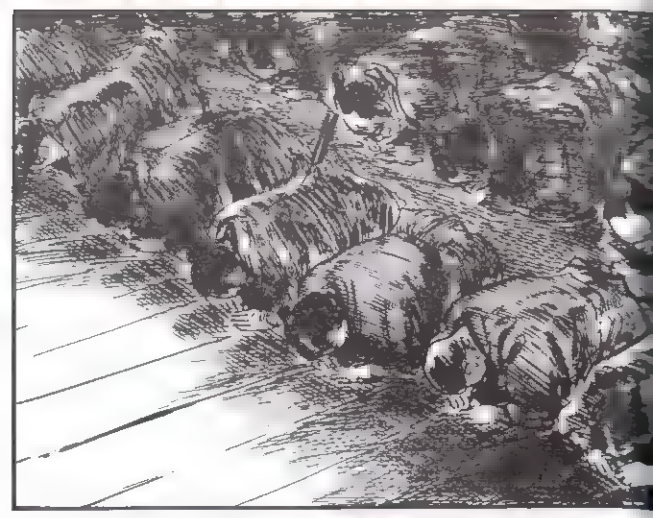

YOU JUST PRAISED HIM AS PEERLESS IN THE WAYS OF SHIDŌ.
I FEAR LEST WE HARM O-YAKATA-SAMA'S NAME.
YES, IT IS OUR DUTY TO WITHER FOR THE YAGYŪ TO PREVAIL. WE SHALL USE ANY MEANS, COWARDLY OR NO.
AND YET WHEN OUR O-YAKATA-SAMA HAS MADE A VOW, AND PRAISES HIS FOE, I AM TROUBLED HOW ARE WE TO FIGHT?
MUST WE NAME OURSELVES? CAN WE STILL USE AMBUSH?
I ASK FOR THE HONOR OF OUR MASTER'S NAME.

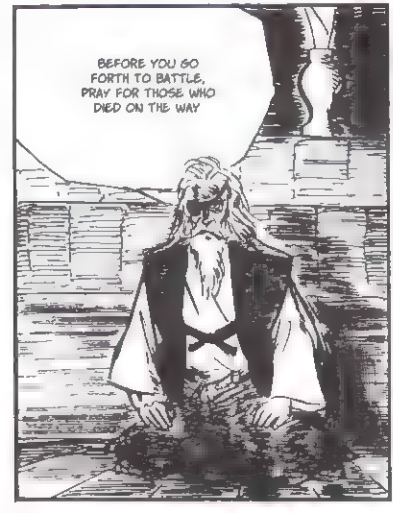
IT IS SHIDŌ FOR YOU TO ATTACK
THINK— WHAT DOES ŌGAMI WANT?
HE WANTS REVENGE ON THE YAGYŪ!
FOR FOUR YEARS HE'S LIVED IN MEIFUMADŌ, ENDURING, SHARPENING HIS FANGS FOR VENGEANCE

HE'S SHAKEN OUR VERY FOUNDATIONS. DRIVEN US TO THE WALL! I'VE HAD TO CALL THE GRASS TO EDO TO DESTROY HIM.
AND WHAT IS THE GRASS?
IT IS THE FOUNDATION THAT SUPPORTS THE YAGYŪ MORE IMPORTANT EVEN THAN I.
HOW MANY GENERATIONS HAS IT TAKEN TO PLANT YOU ACROSS THE NATION ?
YOU ARE EVERYTHING.
TRULY, YOU ARE THE YAGYŪ

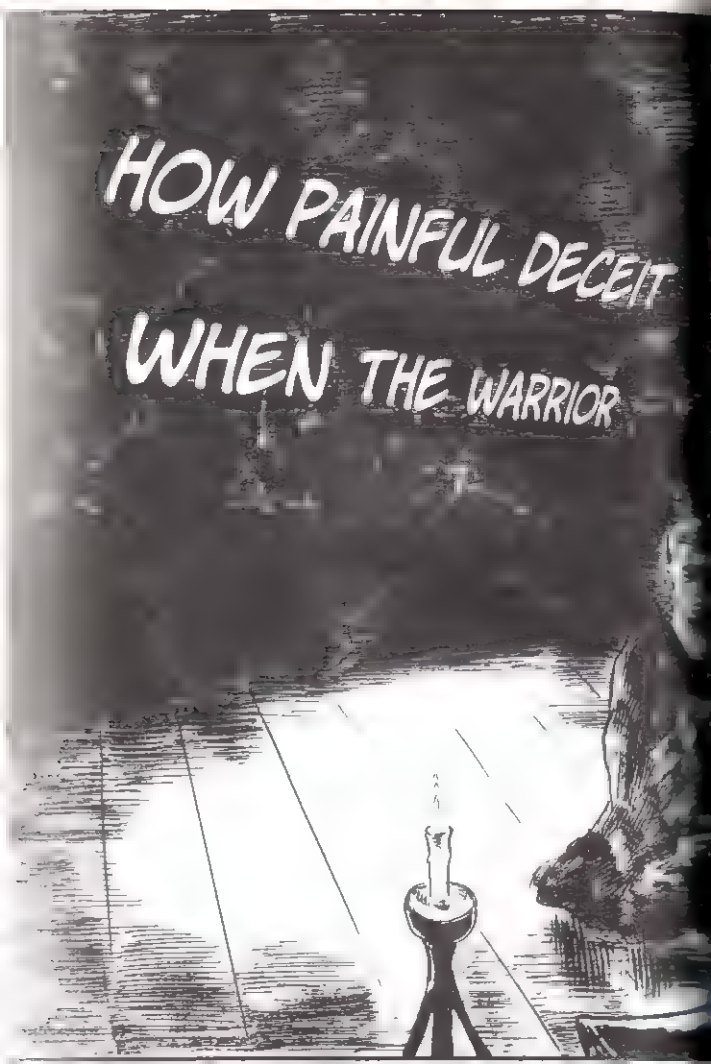
NO WOUND COULD HURT US MORE THAN THE UPROOTING OF THE GRASS.
HOW MANY YEARS WILL IT TAKE TO REPLANT YOU?
SO MANY . . . . .
IT WAS ŌGAMI ITTŌ WHO FORCED ME TO THIS PASS. AND IT IS ITTO WE MUST DEFEAT, AT ANY COST, TO REBUILD OUR FUTURE.
GRIEF IS THIS WHAT THAT WORD MEANS ?

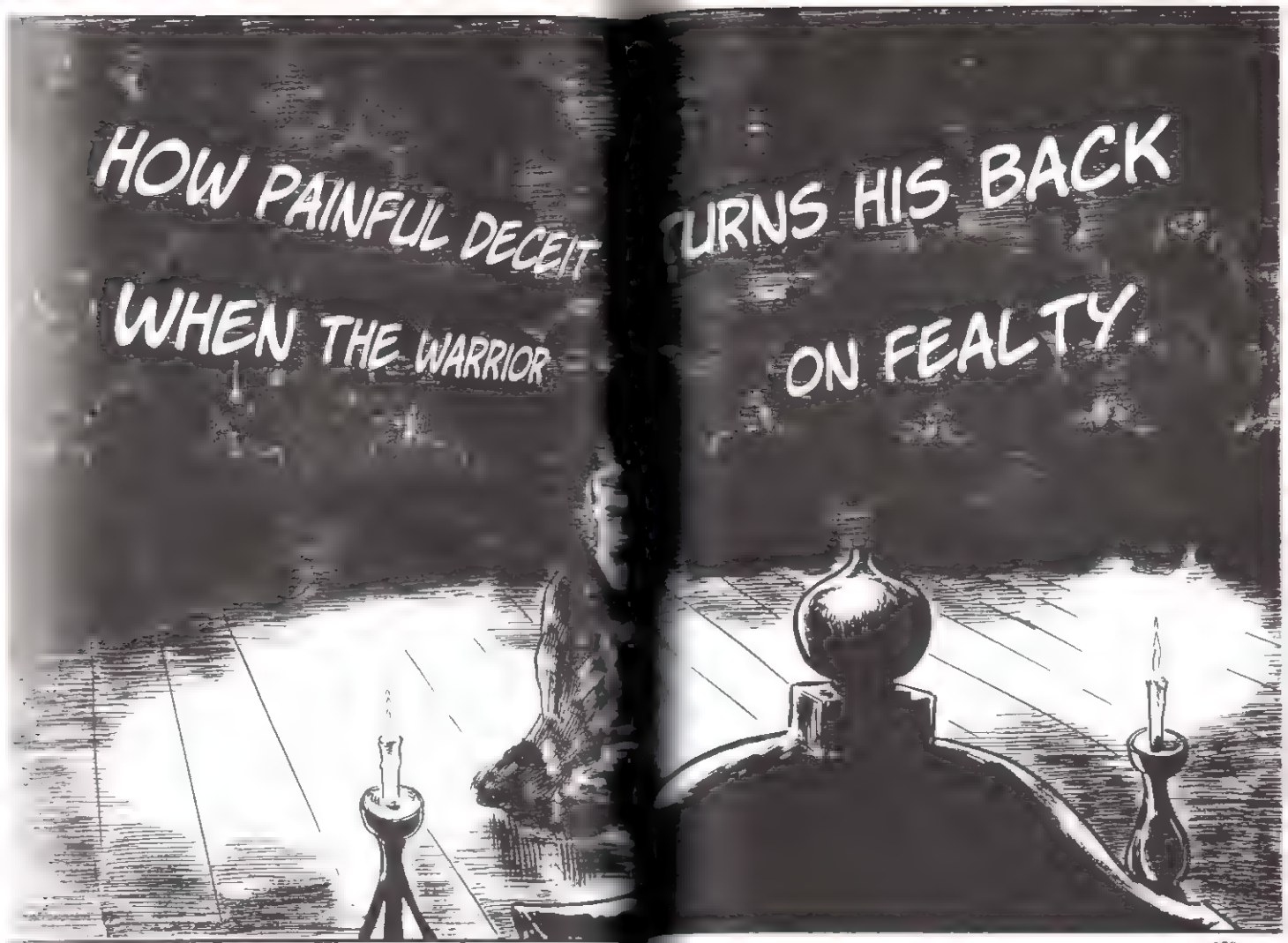
YOU AND I ARE ONE. IF YOU ATTACK, ITTŌ WILL CALL IT SHIDŌ. IT'S WHAT HE MOST DESIRES.
HE CAN KILL ME, BUT WHILE YOU REMAIN, THE YAGYŪ WILL SURVIVE. BURY US BOTH, AND WE PERISH FOREVER.
KILL ITTŌ! WHATEVER IT TAKES!
UNDERSTAND?!

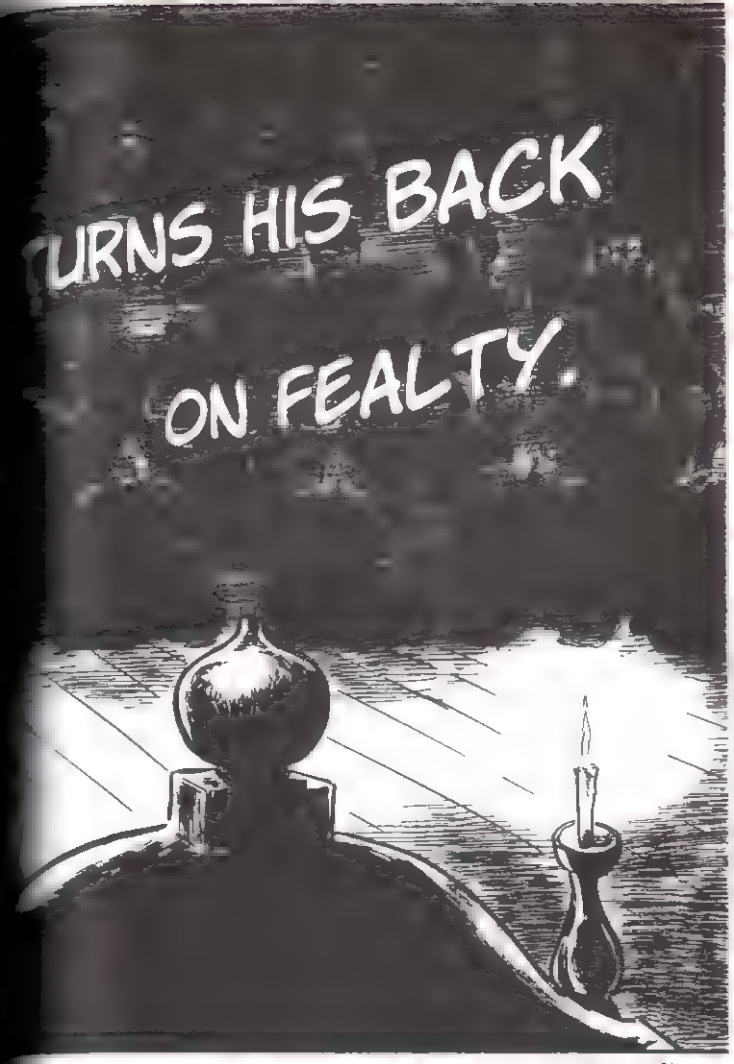



BEFORE YOU GO FORTH TO BATTLE, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO DIED ON THE WAY

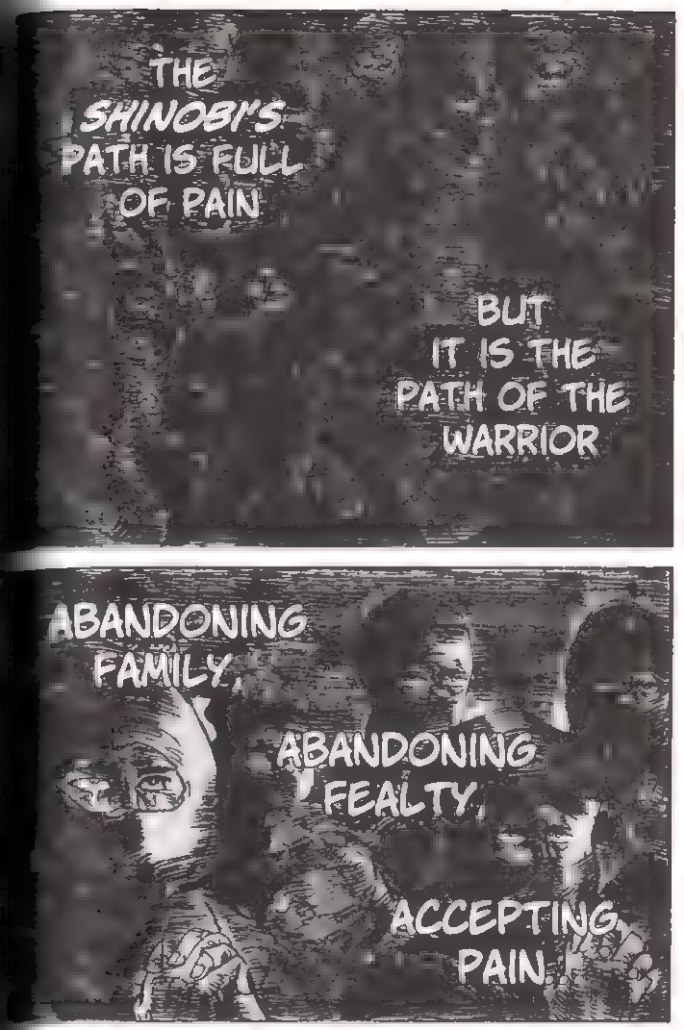
HOW PAINFUL DECEIT WHEN THE WARRIOR TURNS HIS BACK ON FEALTY.

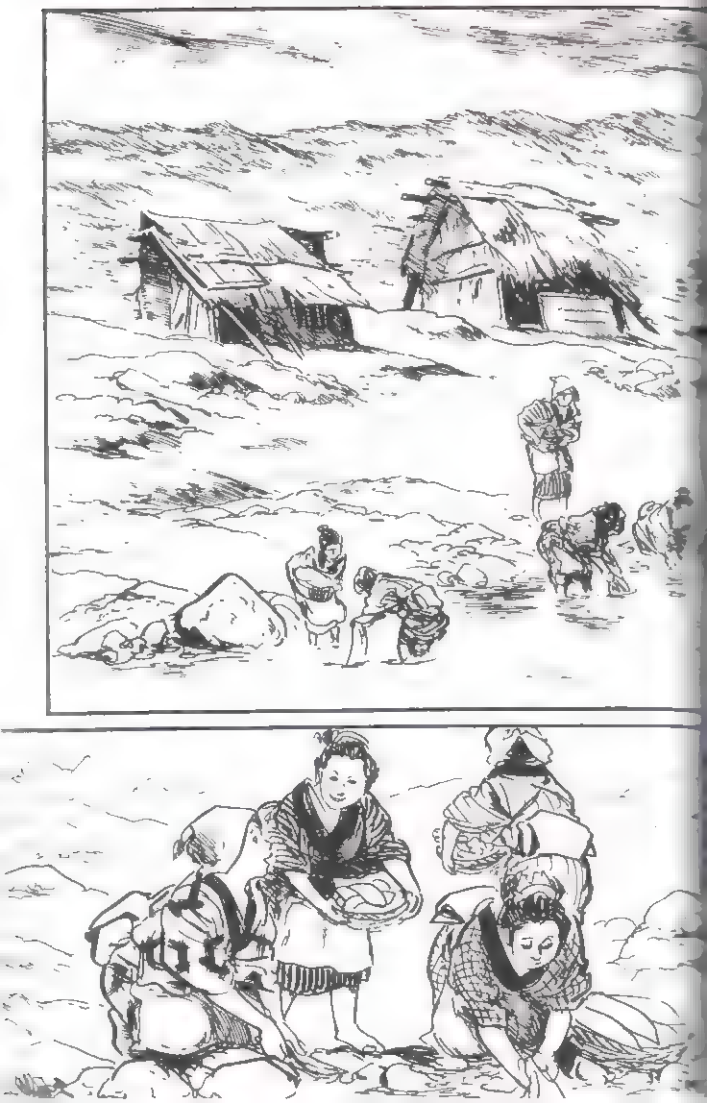

HOW PAINFUL DECEIT
WHEN THE WARRIOR

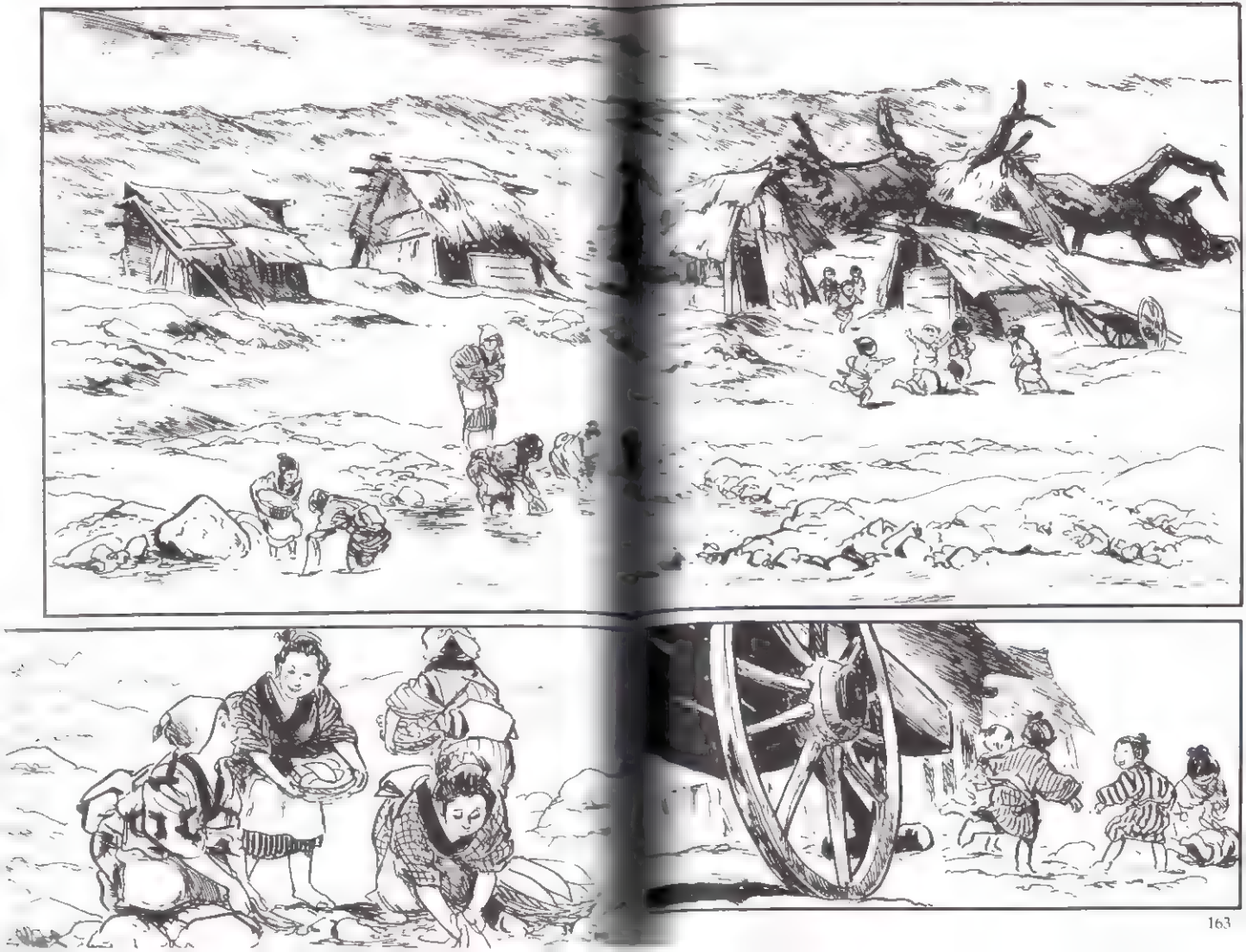

HOW PAINFUL DECEIT
WHEN THE WARRIOR
URNS HIS BACK
ON FEALTY.

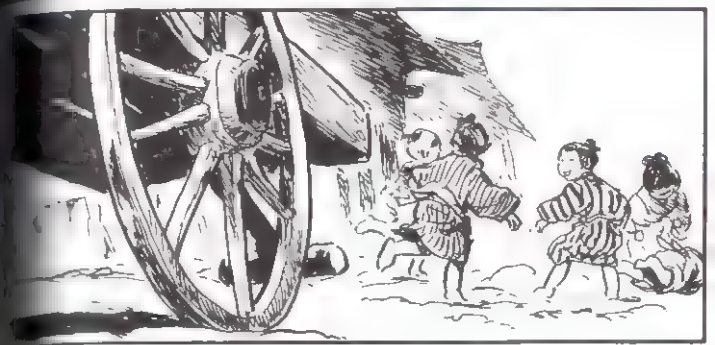

URNS HIS BACK
ON FEALTY.

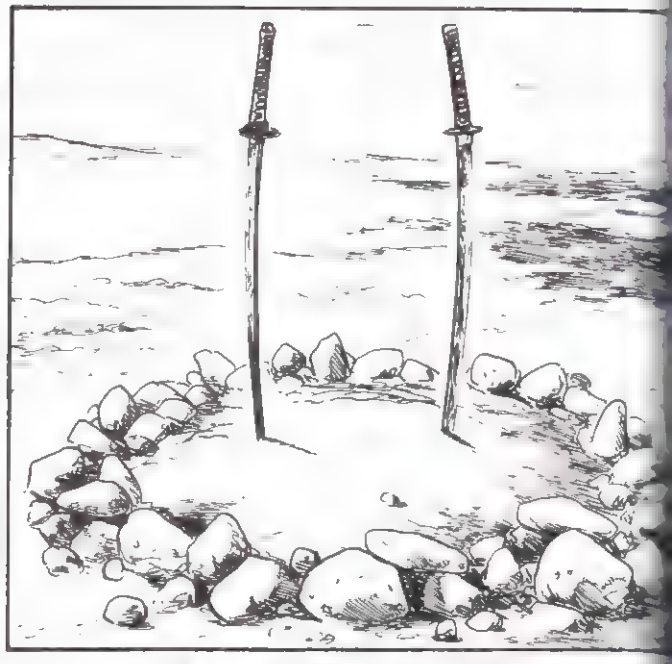
HOW PAINFUL DECEIT WHEN THE WARRIOR TURNS HIS BACK ON HIS FAMILY
HOW PAINFUL DECEIT WHEN THE WARRIO
TURNS HIS BACK ON HIS FAM


THE SHINOBI'S PATH IS FULL OF PAIN
BUT IT IS THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR
ABANDONING FAMILY,
ABANDONING FEALTY,
ACCEPTING PAIN.

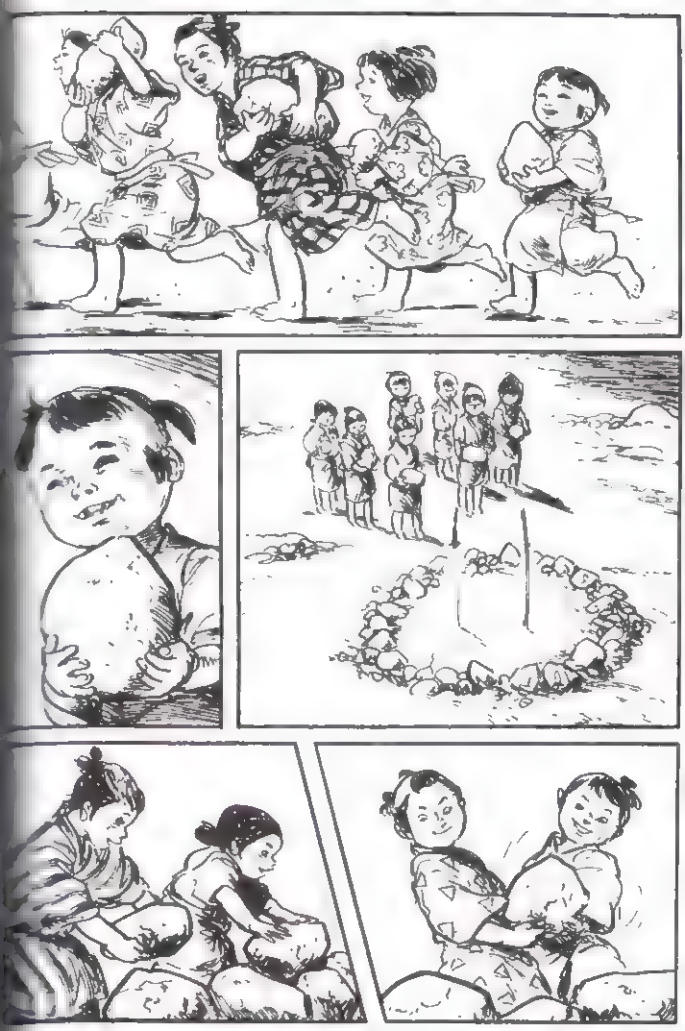




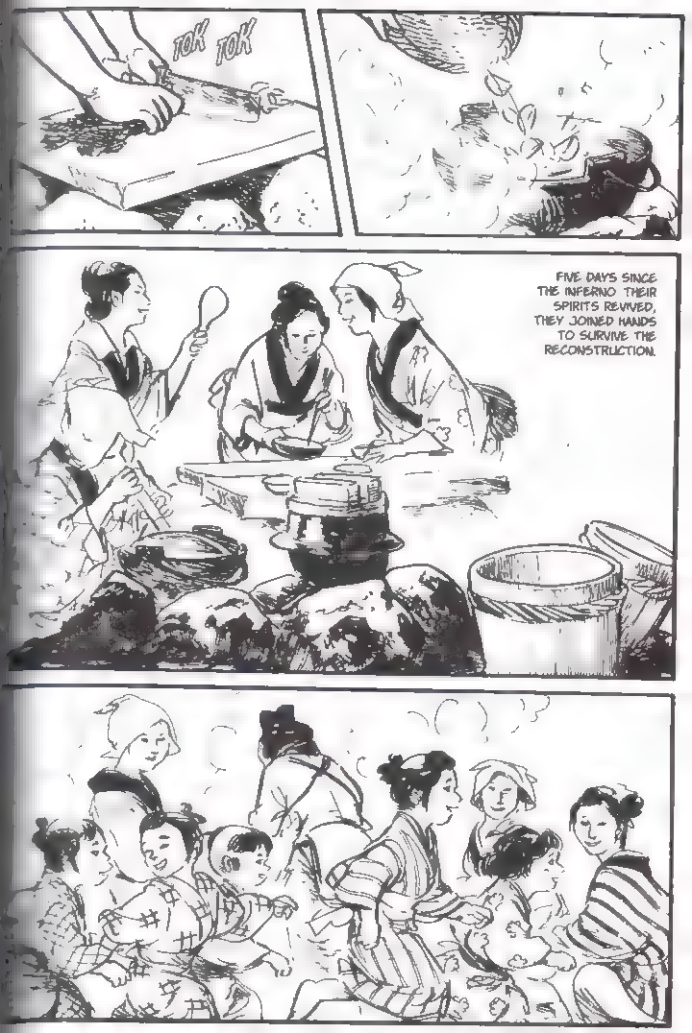


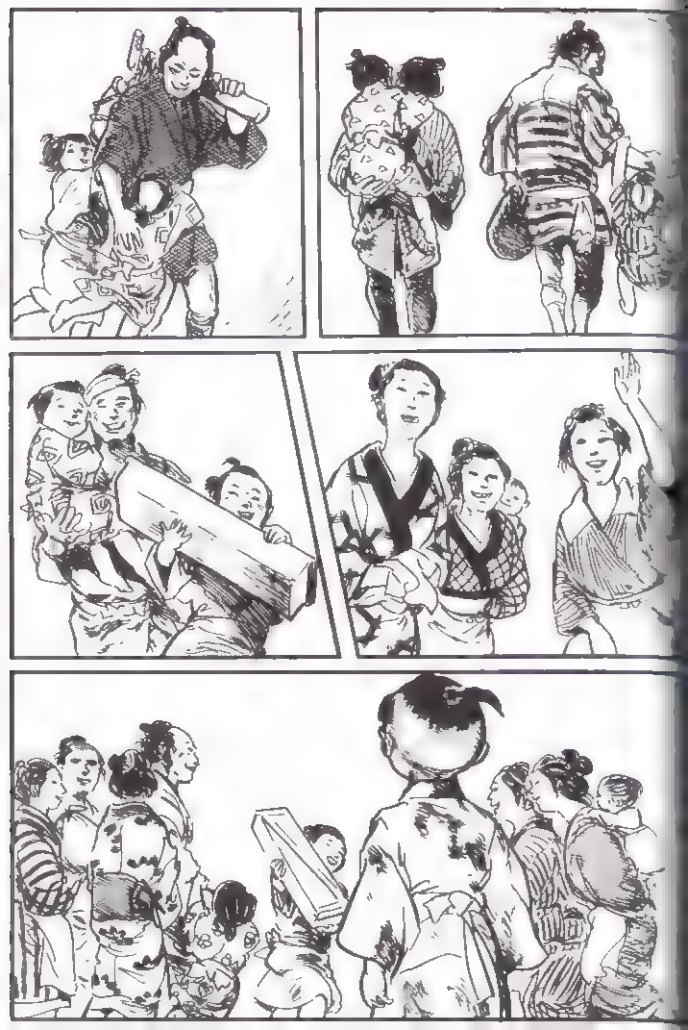


YAHOO!!
WHEEE

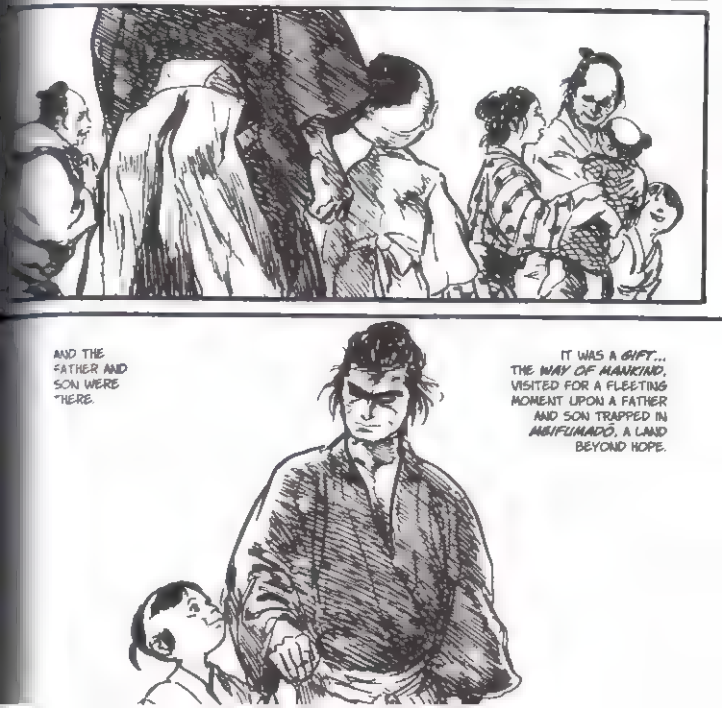


KLONK!
THE PEOPLE HAD GATHERED THEIR CHILDREN, TOO..
ALL OF THE REFUGEES FRO THE GREA EDO FIRE

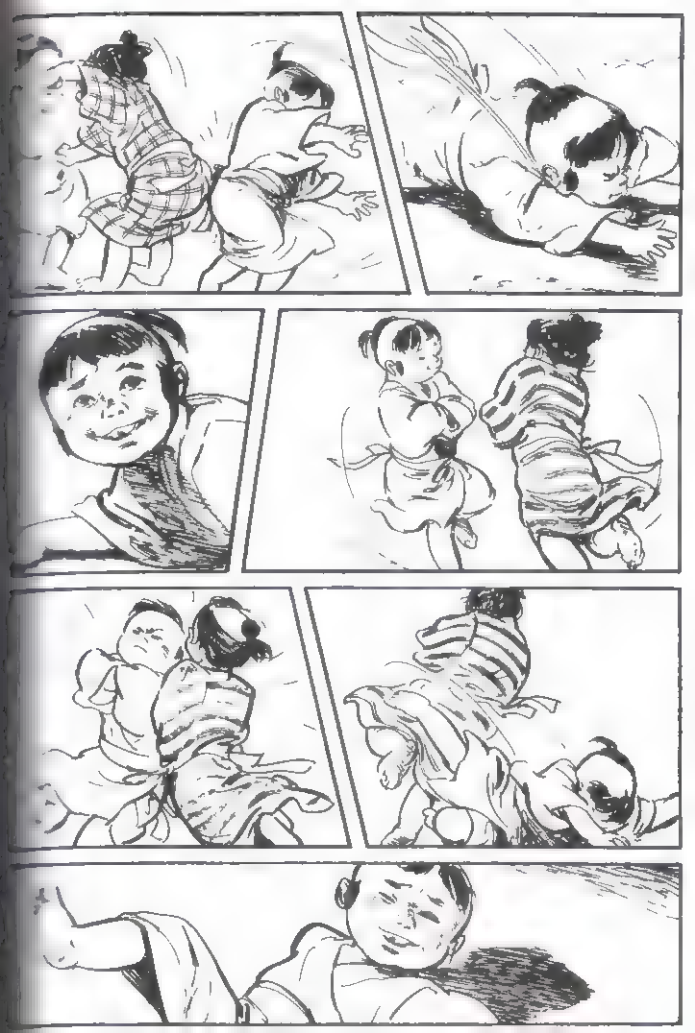

TOK TOK
FIVE DAYS SINCE THE INFERNO THEIR SPIRITS REVIVED, THEY JOINED HANDS TO SURVIVE THE RECONSTRUCTION.

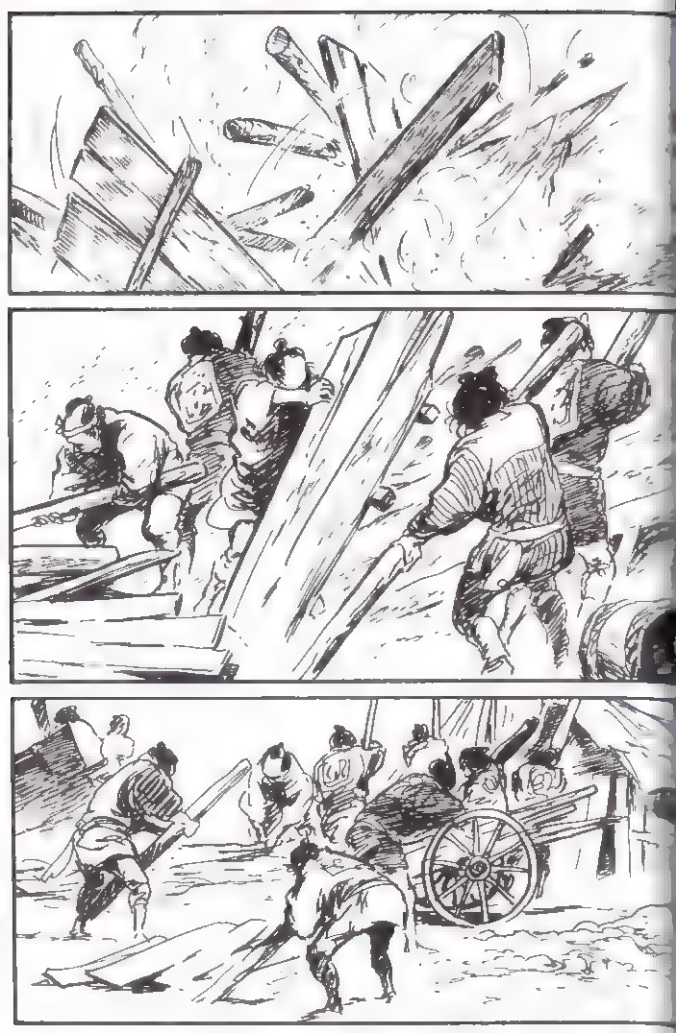


...ERE WERE ...APS HERE. ...UGHTER ...D SWEAT ...OPE
THE AMAZING STRENGTH OF THE COMMON MAN— SPRINGING BACK TO THEIR FEET, *LIVING* WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT

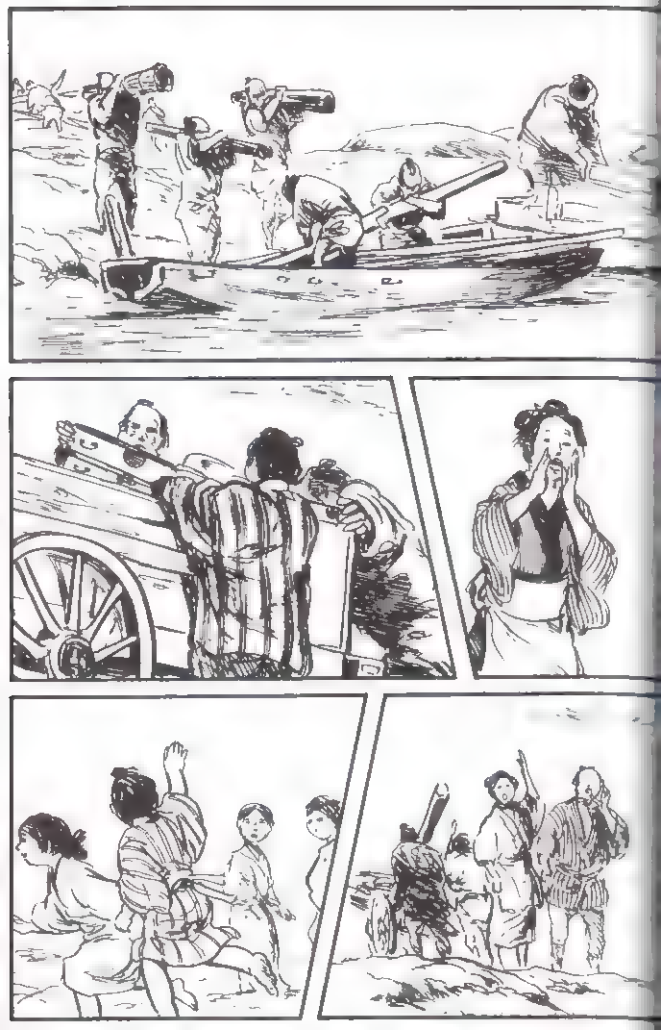

AND THE FATHER AND SON WERE THERE.
IT WAS A *GIFT*... THE *WAY OF MANKIND*, VISITED FOR A FLEETING MOMENT UPON A FATHER AND SON TRAPPED IN *MUFUMADŌ*, A LAND BEYOND HOPE.

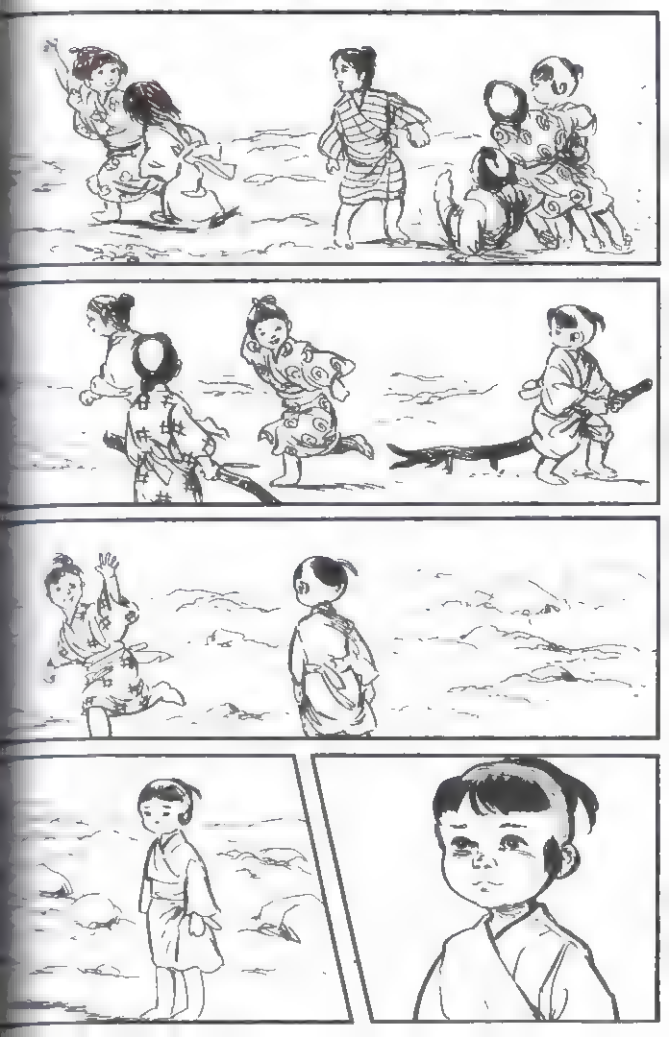
WHEEE!!
YAAAY!

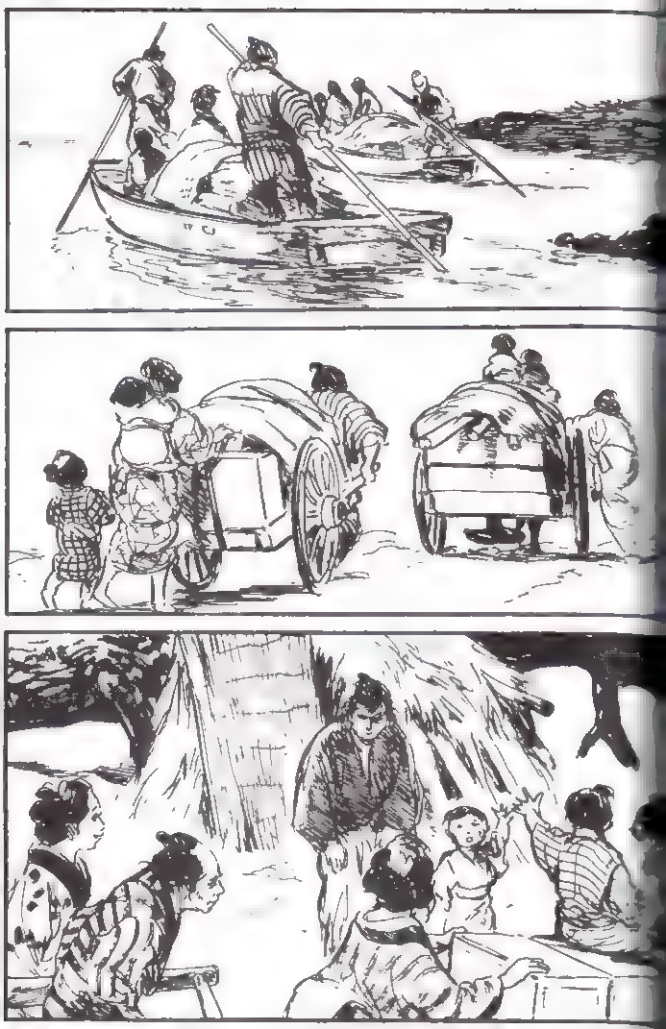


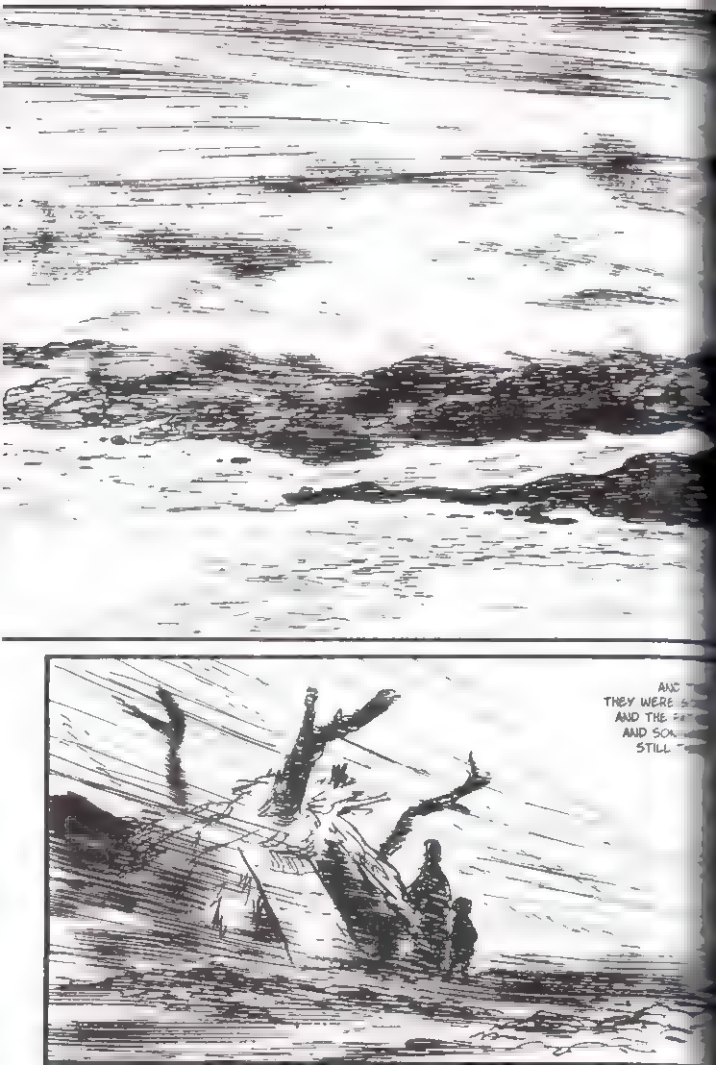


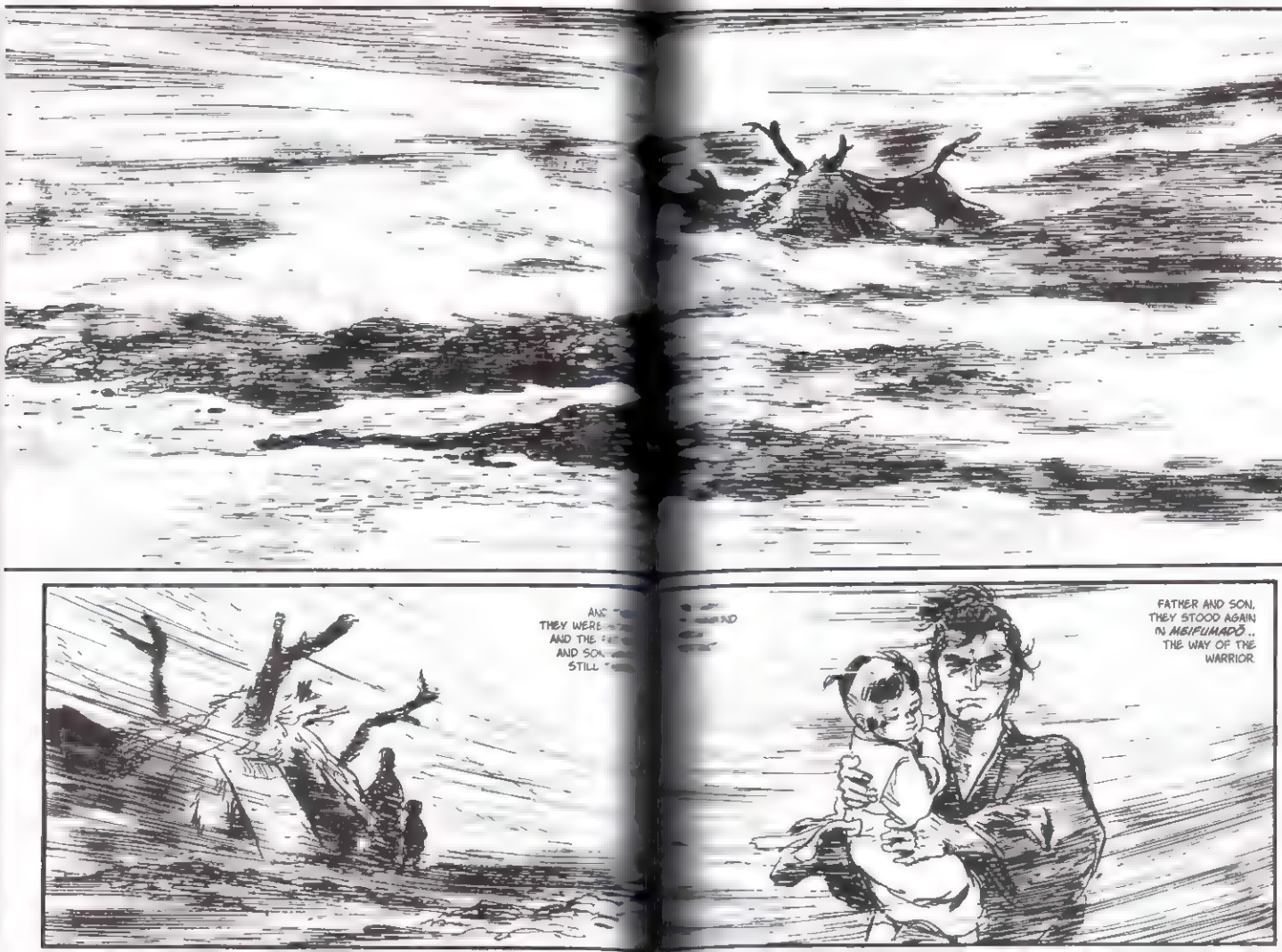
KTAK
KLONK
SYAKK

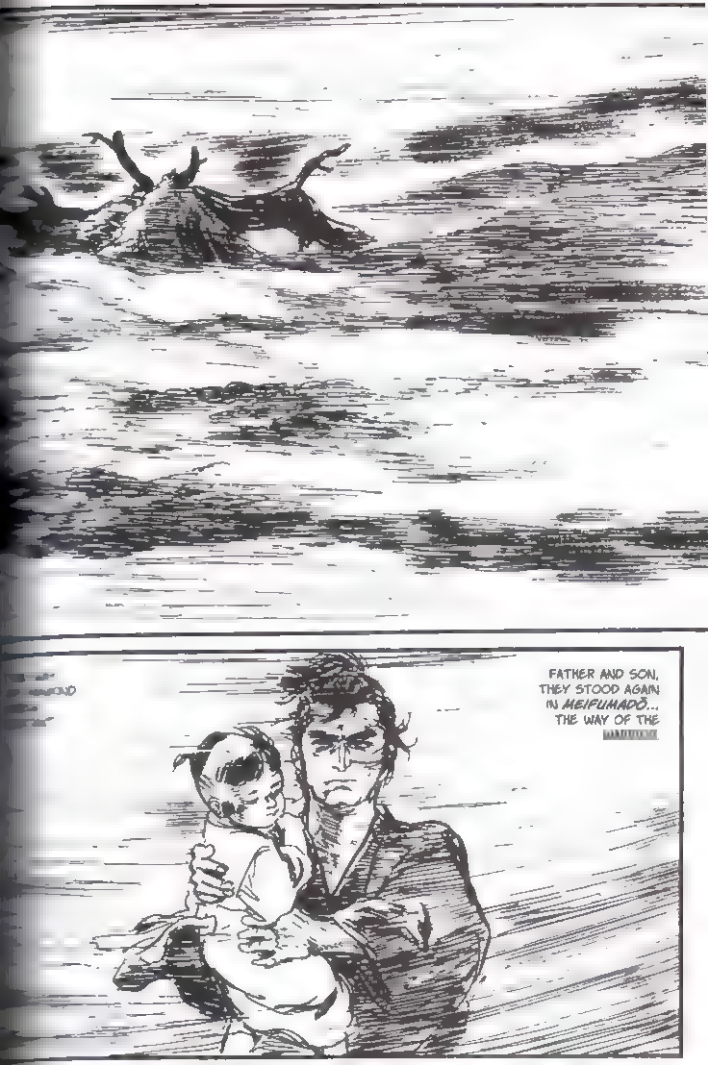


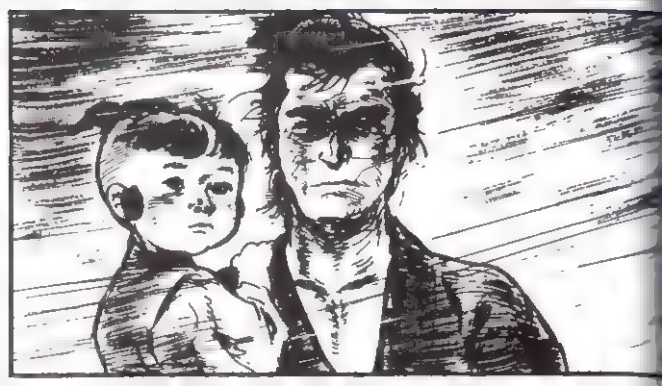





AND
THEY WERE
AND THE
AND SO
STILL

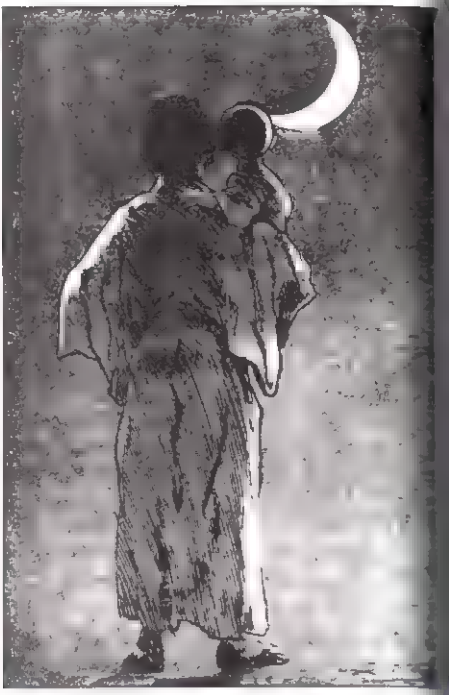

AND
THEY WERE
AND THE
AND SON
STILL
THE END
FATHER AND SON,
THEY STOOD AGAIN
IN MEIFUMADŌ...
THE WAY OF THE
WARRIOR.

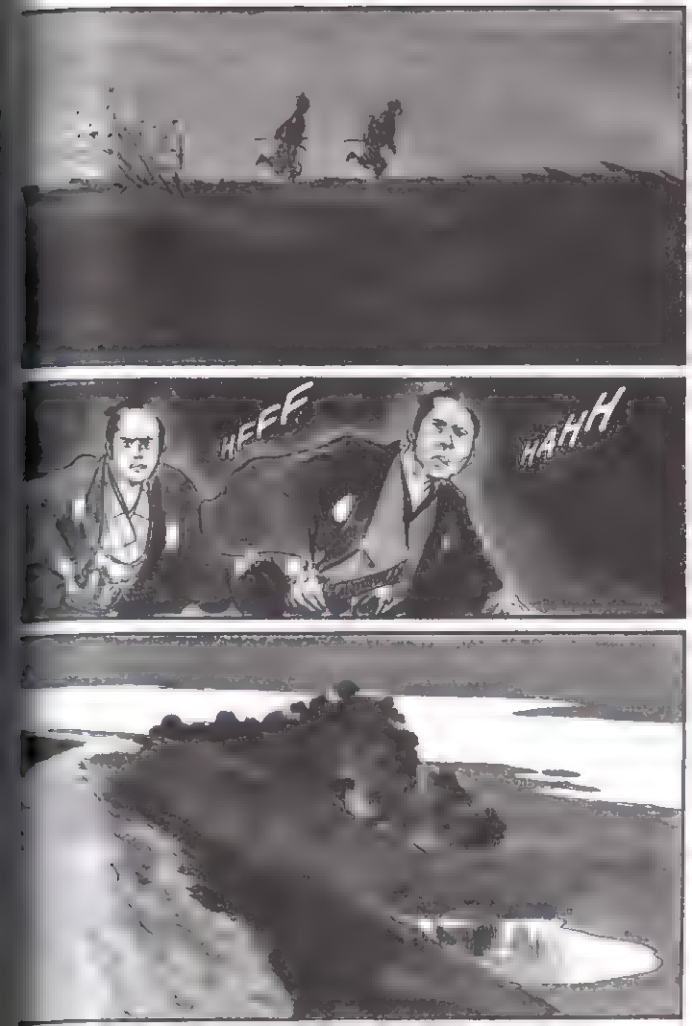

FATHER AND SON, THEY STOOD AGAIN IN MEIFUMADŌ... THE WAY OF THE

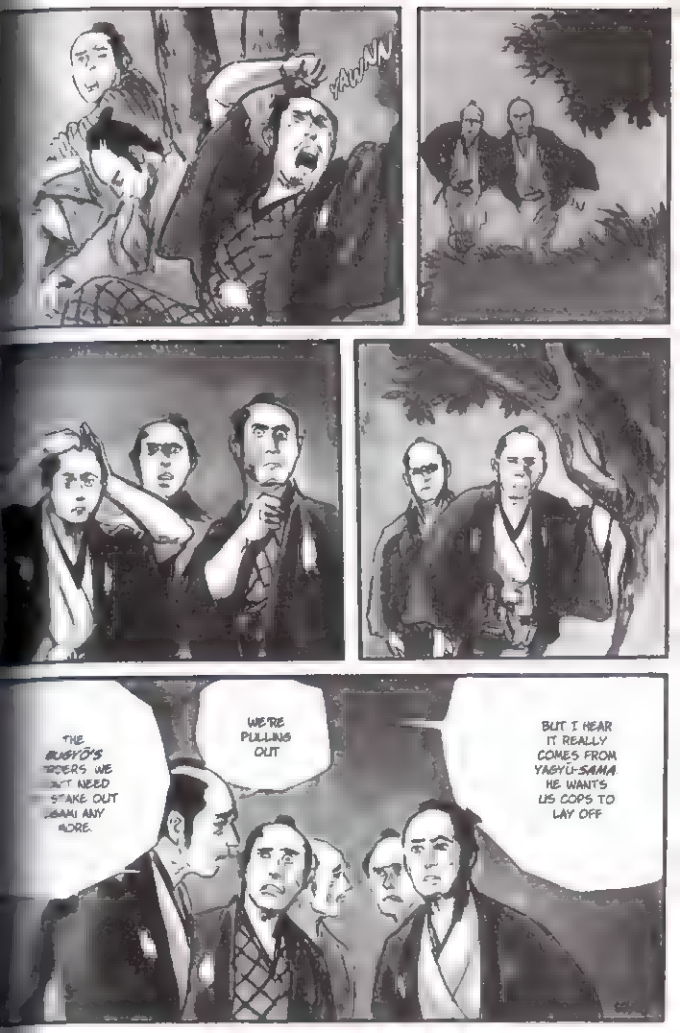


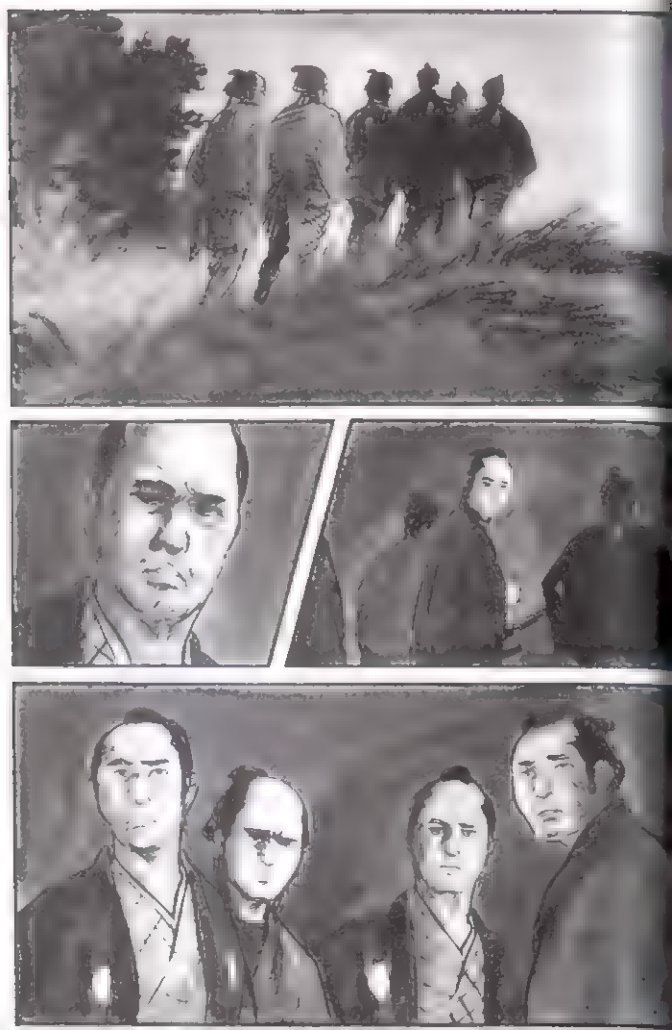
the hundred and thirty-sixth

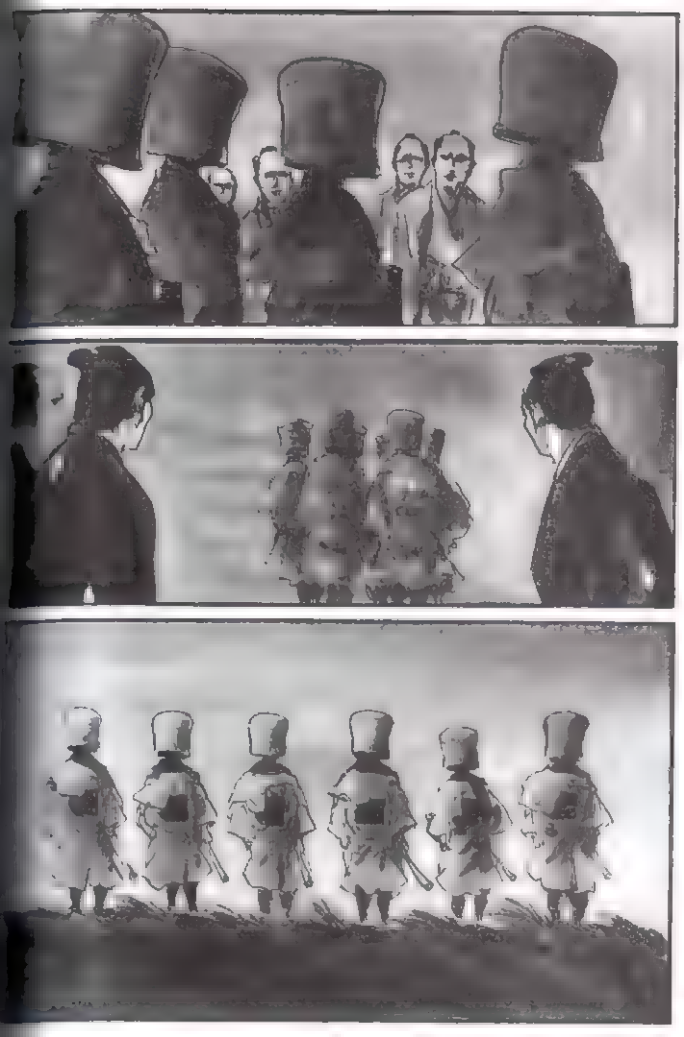
Battle's Eve

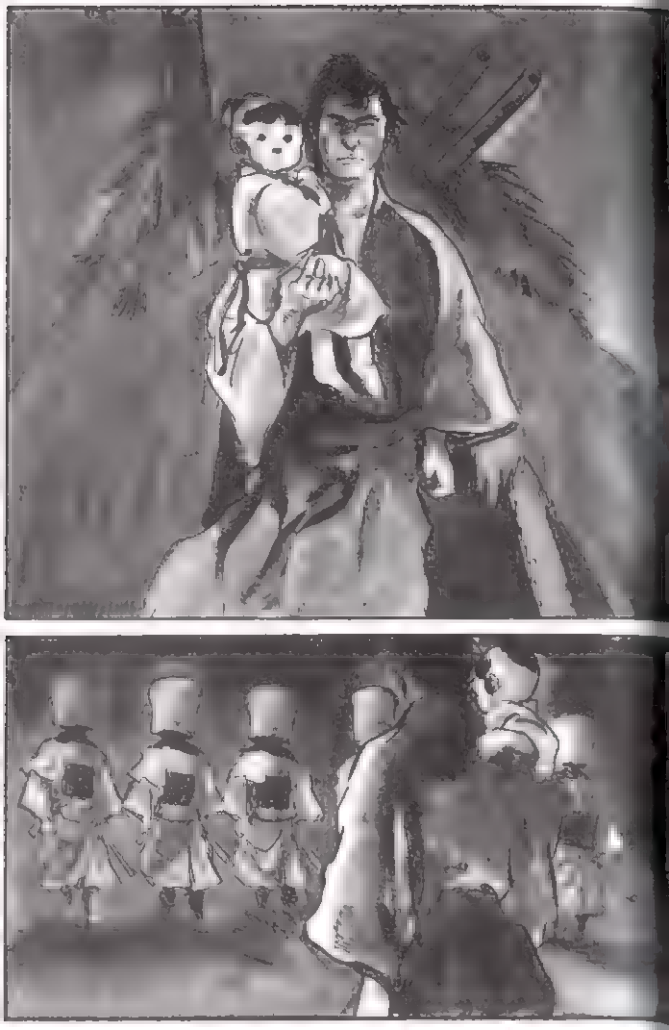


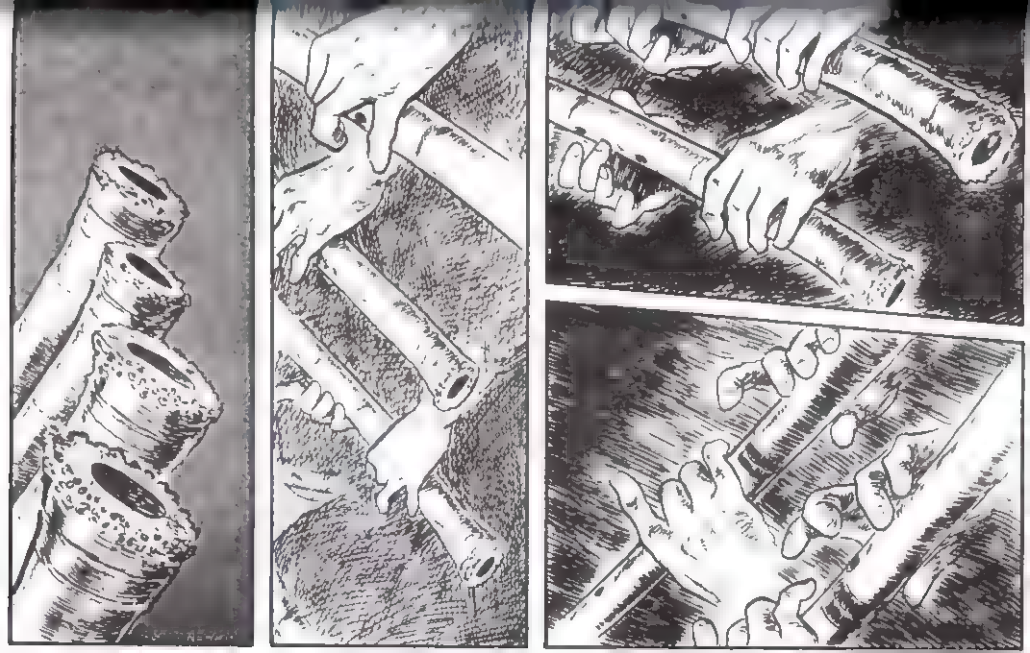

HFFF
HAHH

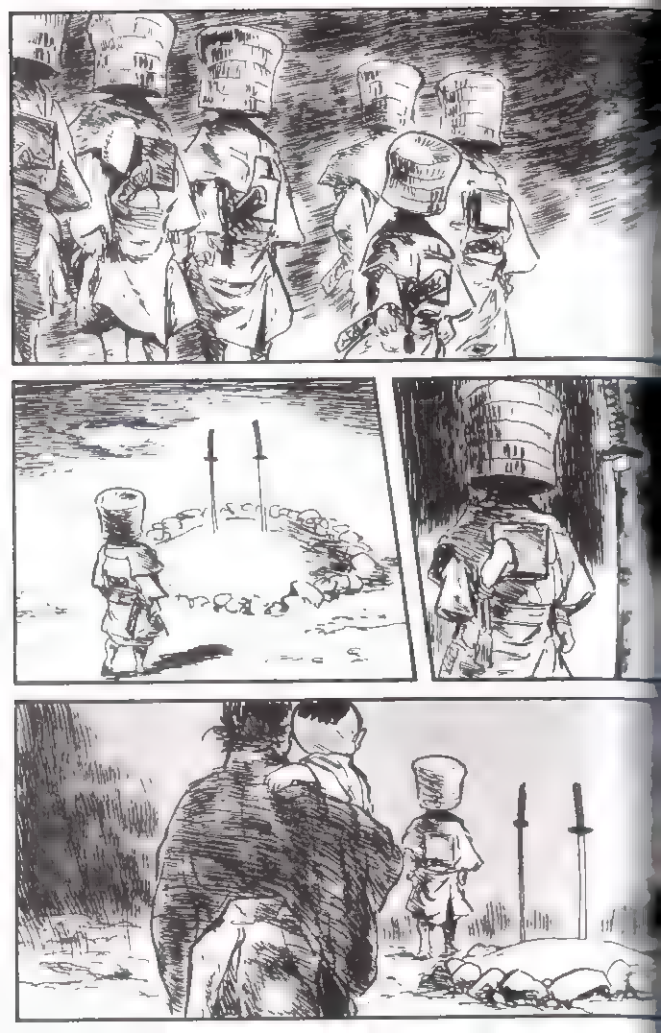

YAWN
THE RIKYŌ'S FEDERS WE DON'T NEED TO STAKE OUT ISSAKI ANY MORE.
WE'RE PULLING OUT
BUT I HEAR IT REALLY COMES FROM YAGYŪ-SAMA. HE WANTS US COPS TO LAY OFF

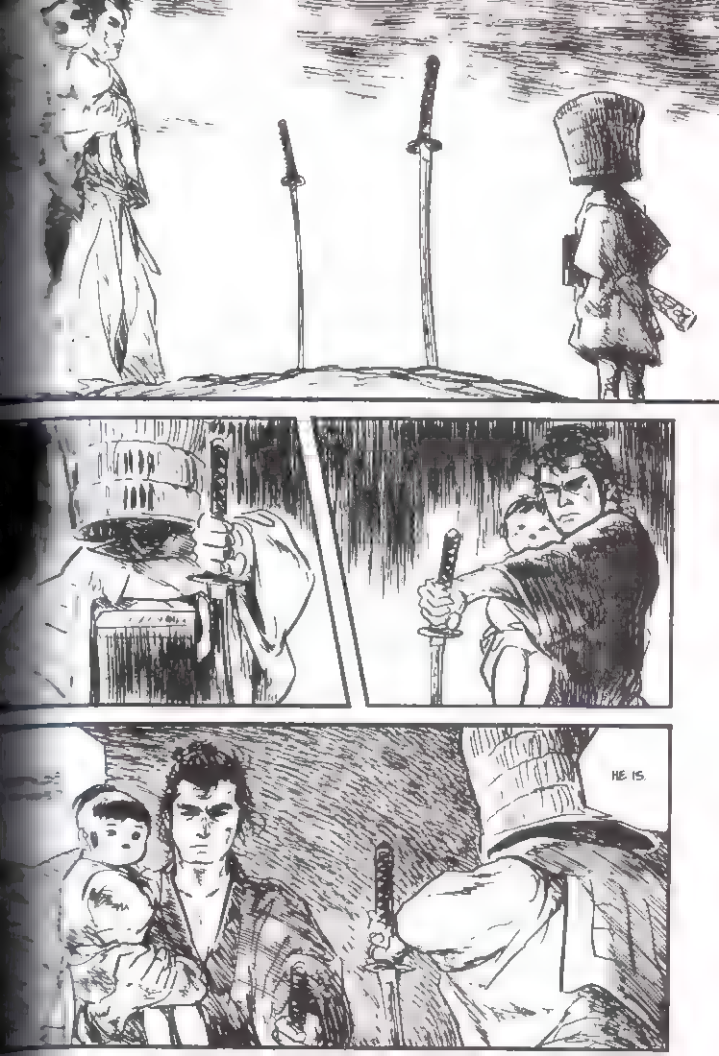




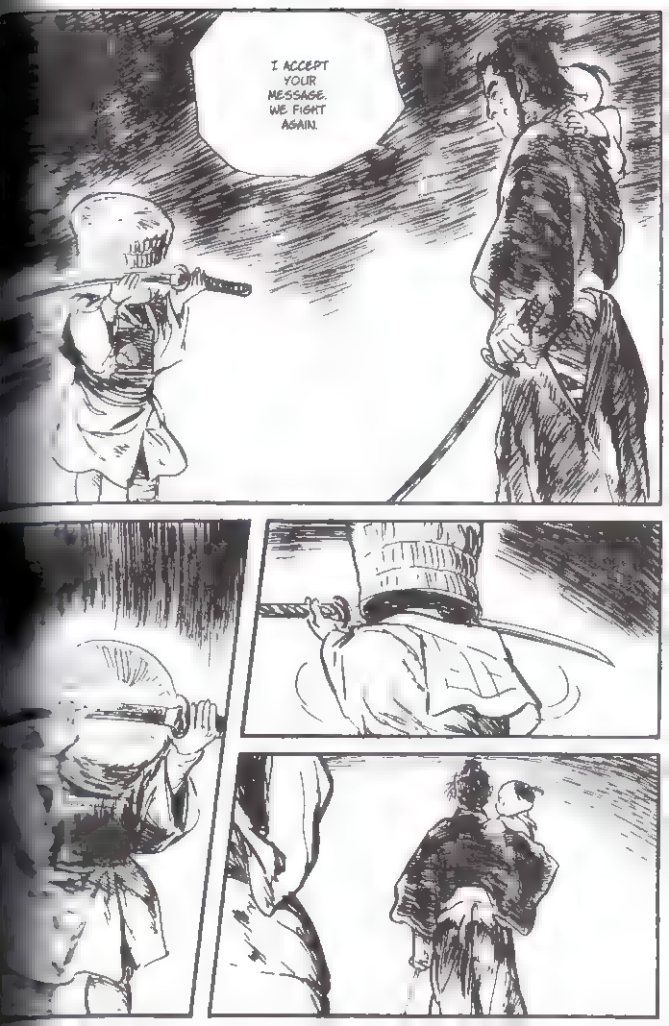


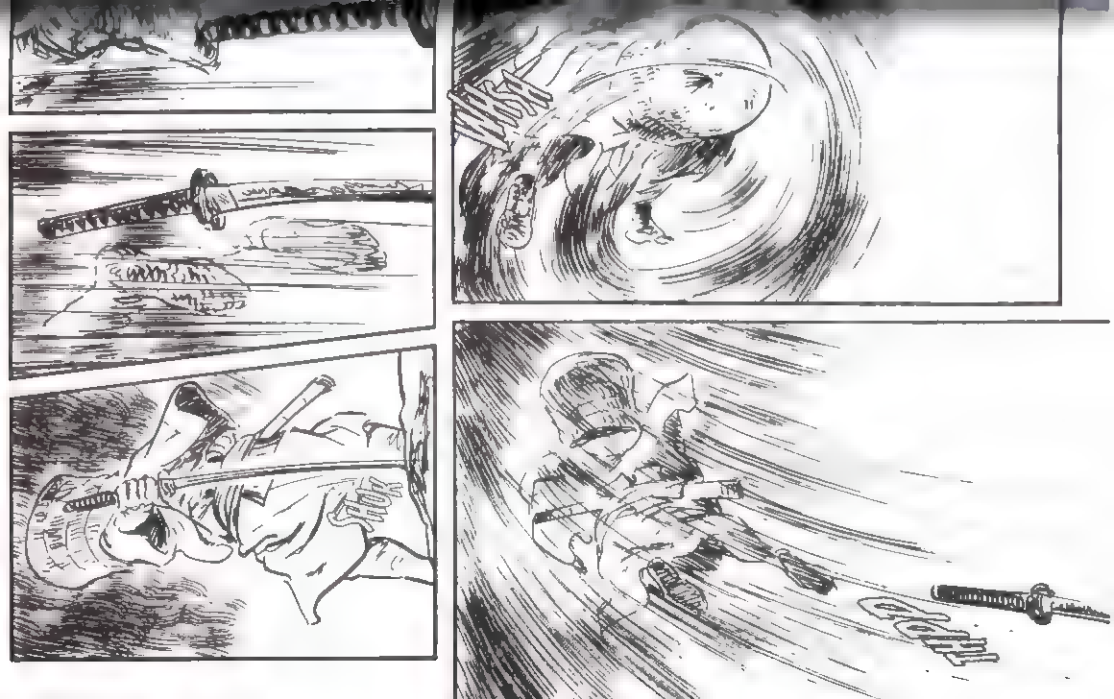





HE IS.

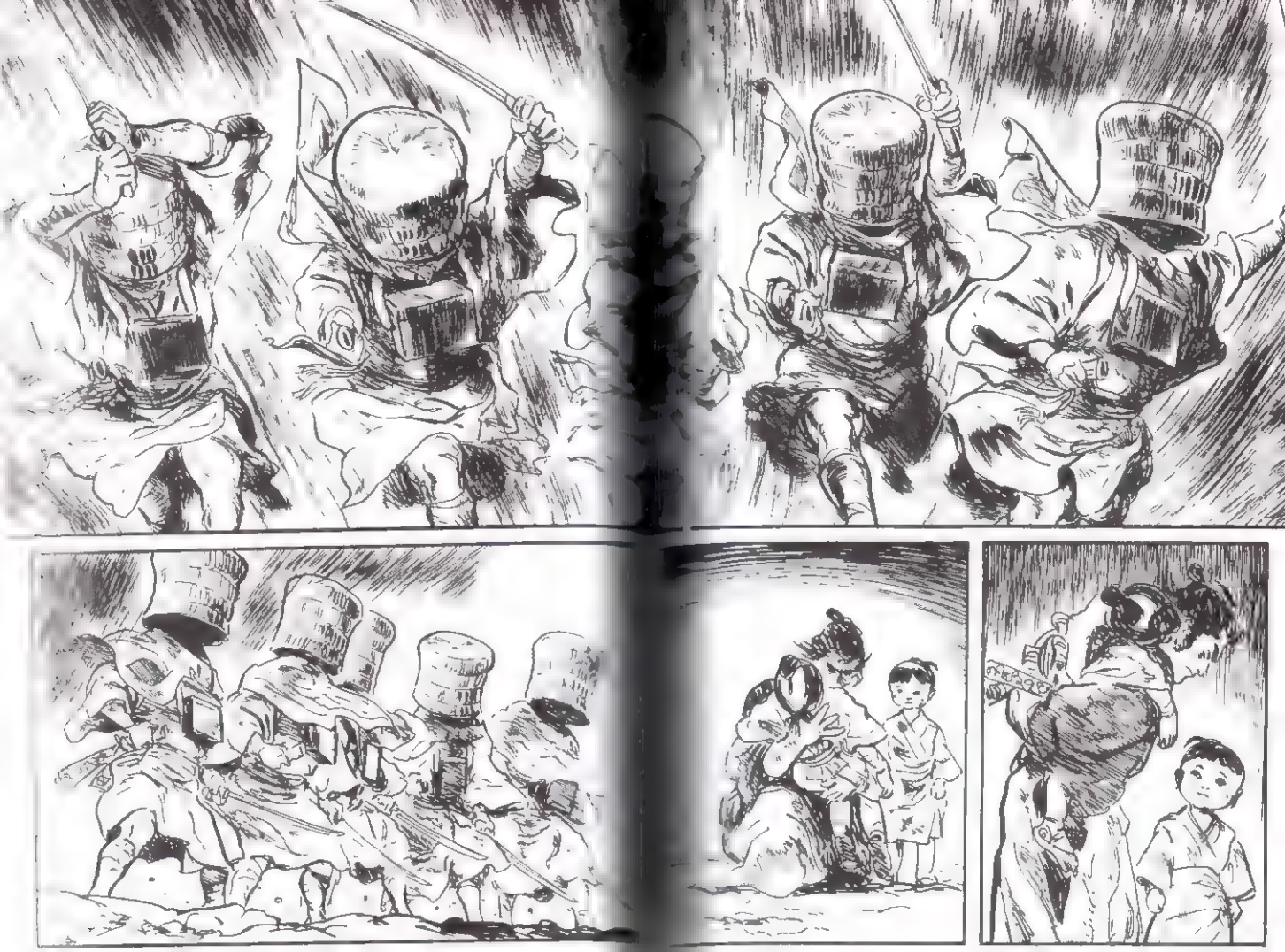
THEN LET ME ASK ARE YOU GRASSP
YES. NAMELESS GRASS WE WITHER FOR THE YAGYŪ.
THE YAGYŪ ARE THE GRASS. WE THE YAGYŪ

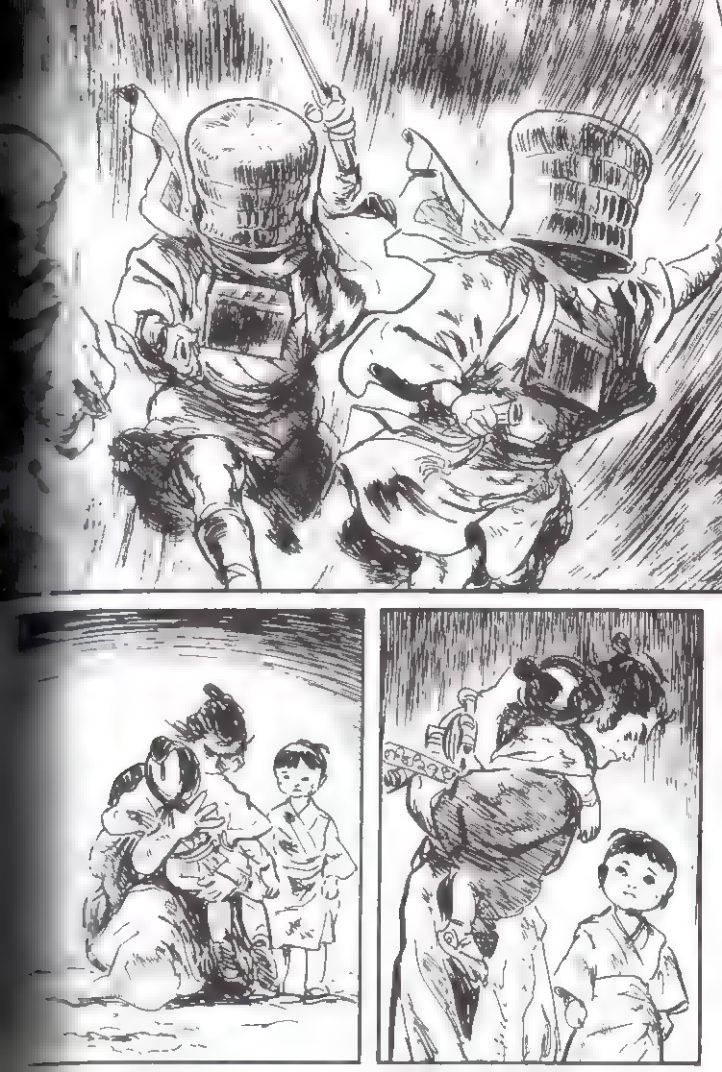

I ACCEPT YOUR MESSAGE. WE FIGHT AGAIN.

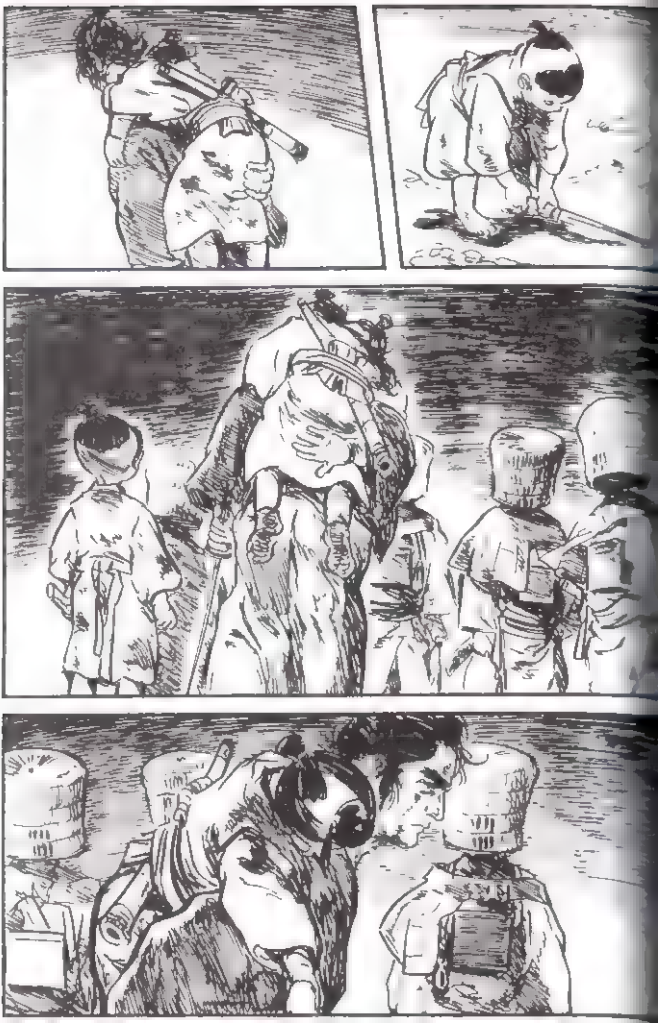

Gah!

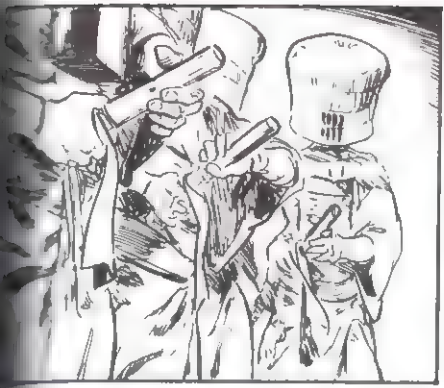
FWIT

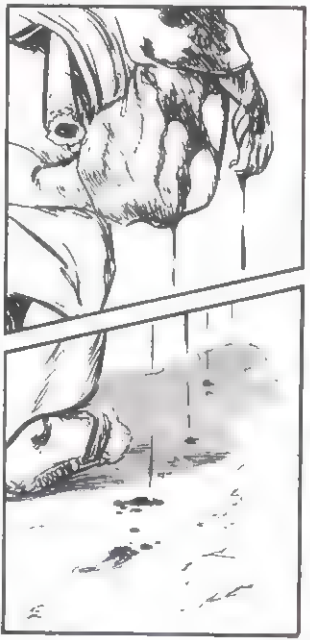
FA.
FATHER.

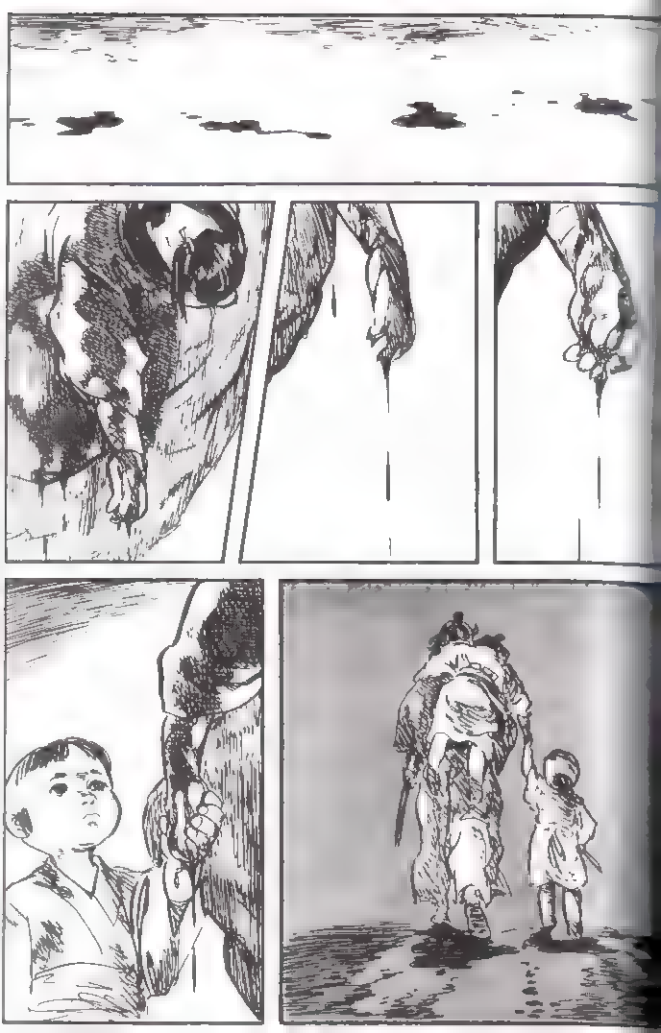




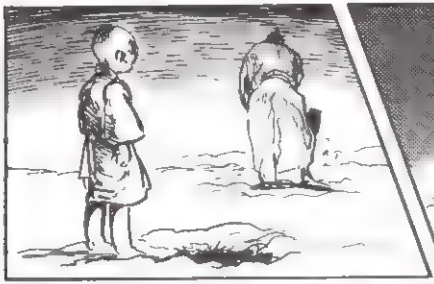


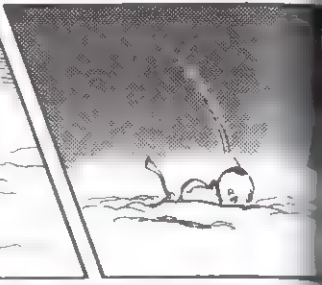


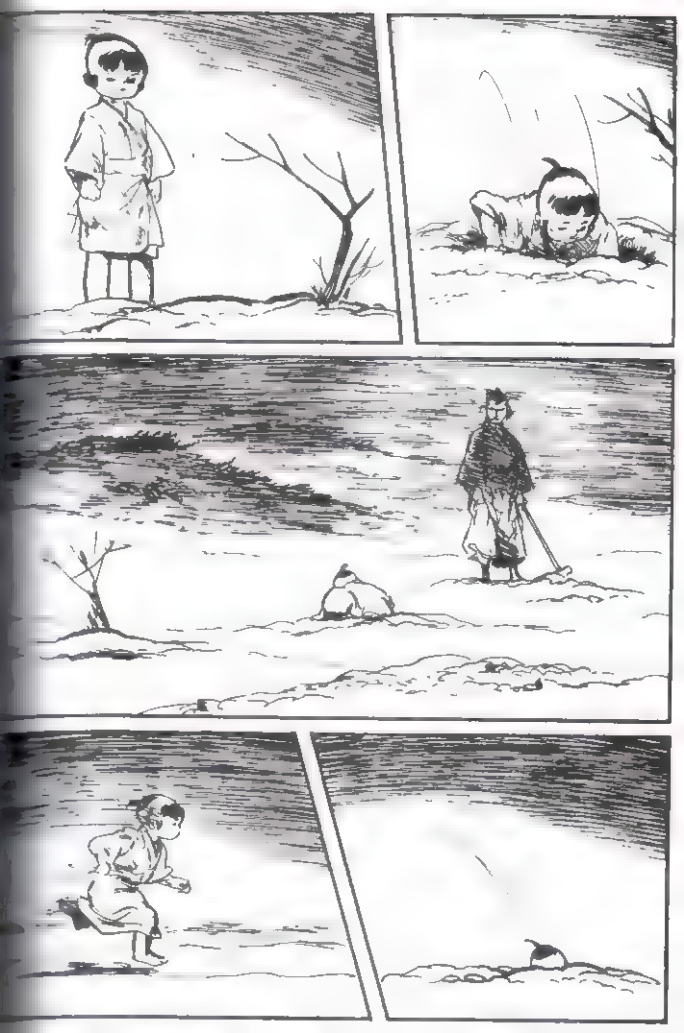


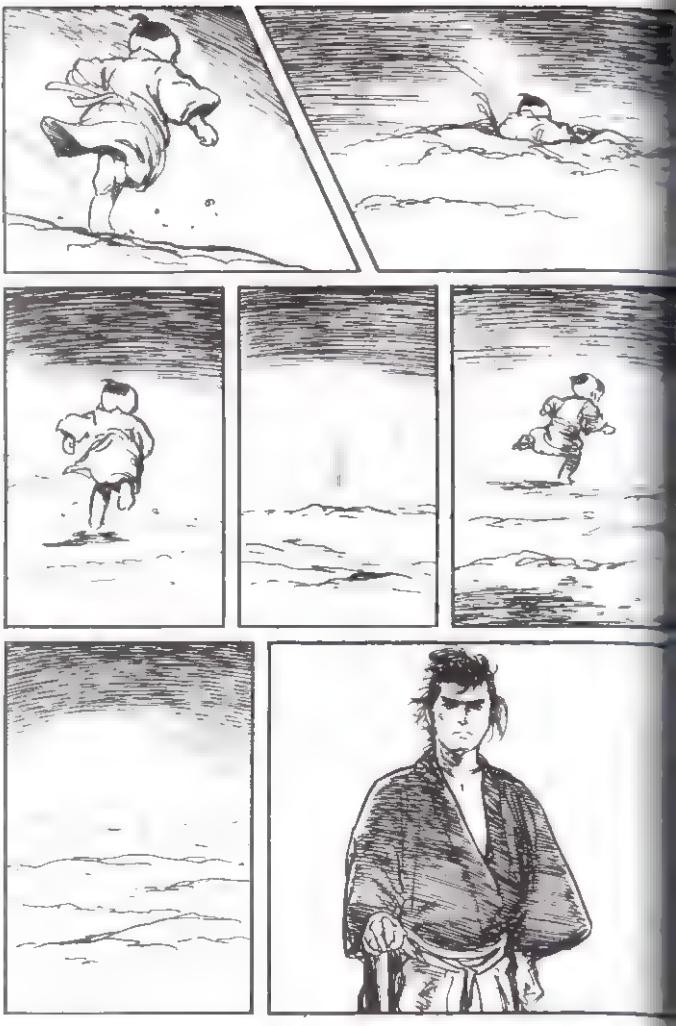


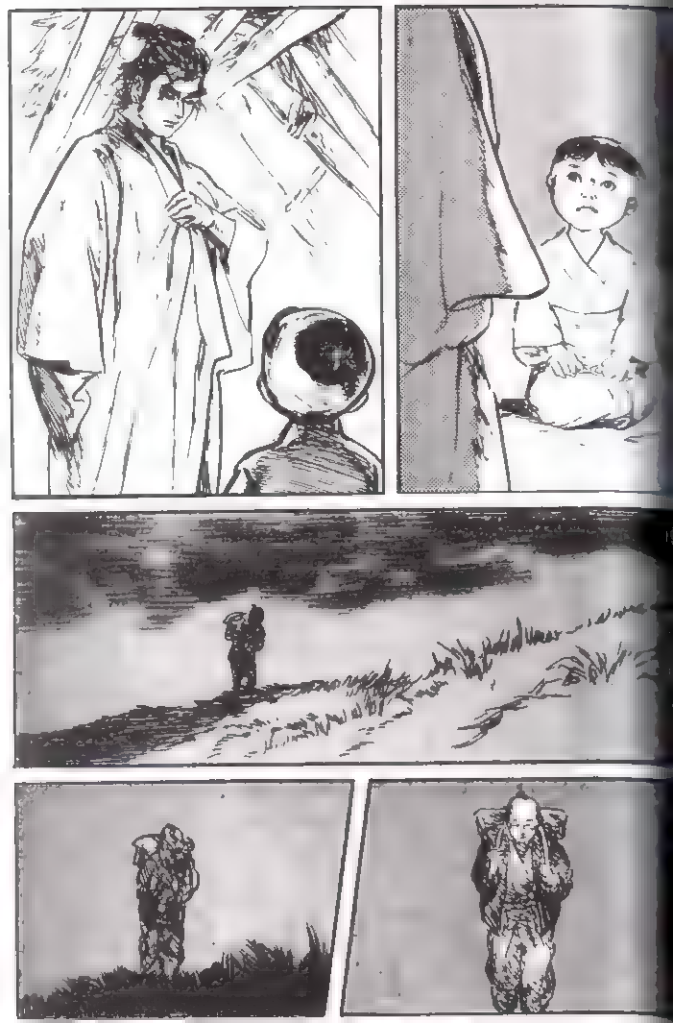
THE
GREENEST
SHOOT
....

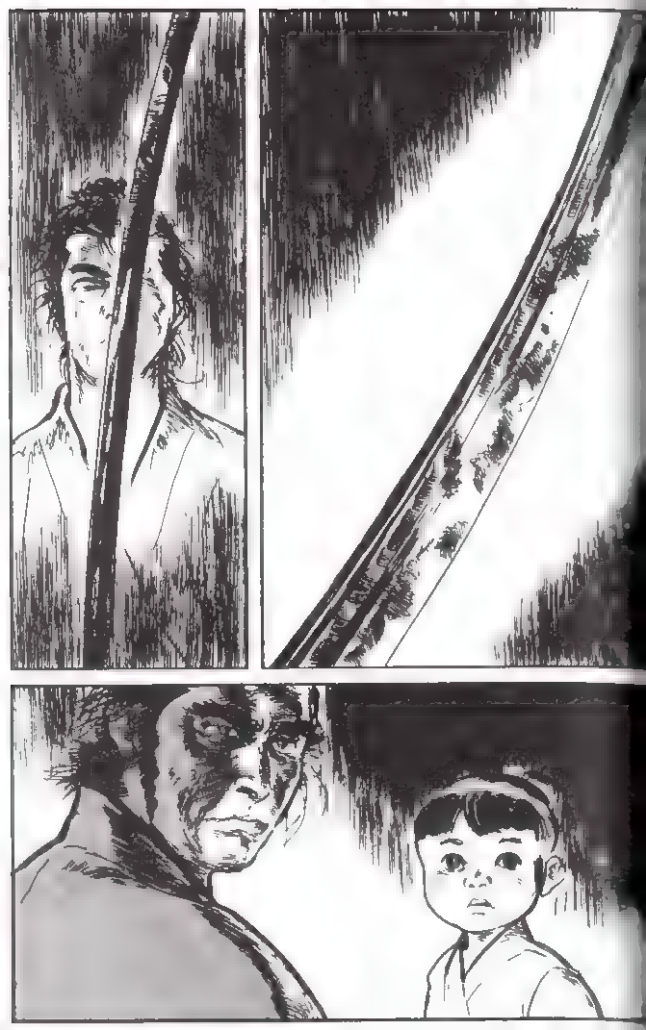










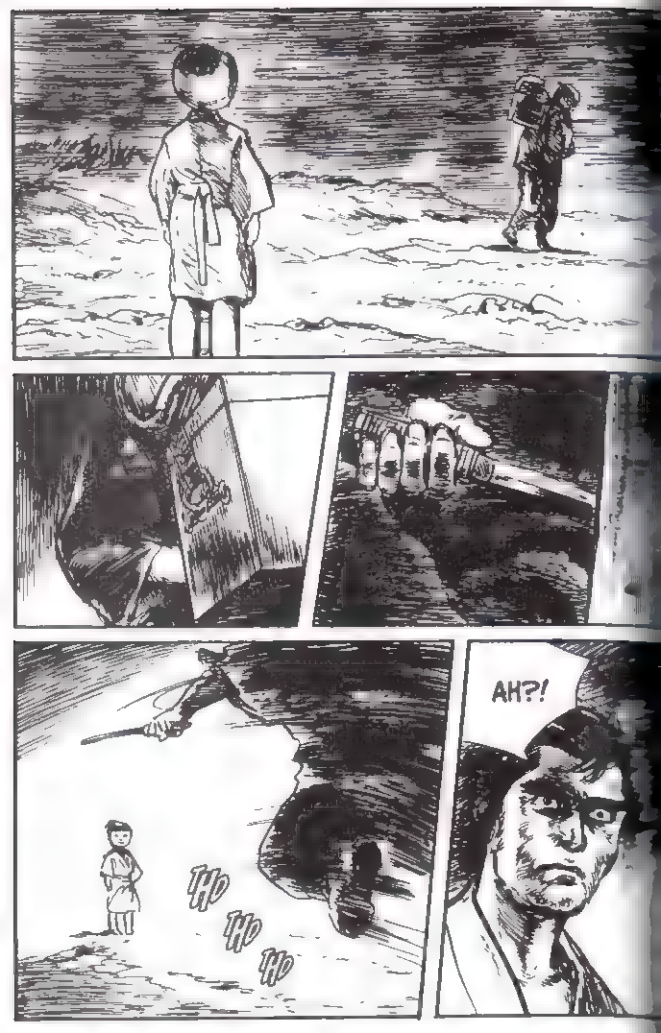


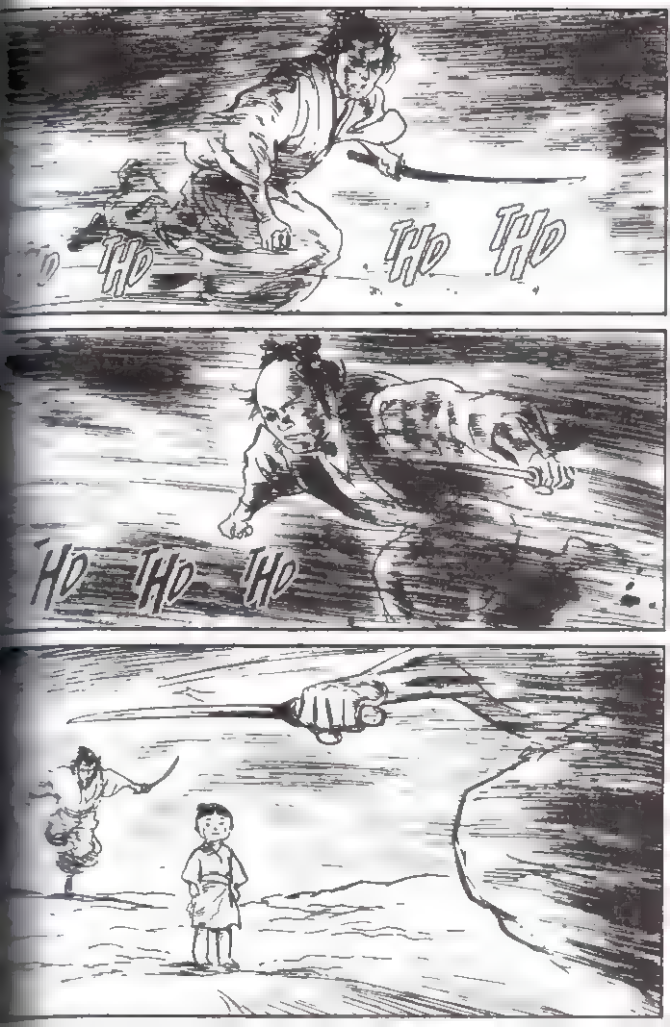
YAGYŪ-SAMA REQUESTS I SHARPEN ŌGAMI ITTŌ-SAMA'S SWORD

SHSHHK
SH

KANG
KANG
KANG
KANG

A MAGNIFICENT DŌTANUKI.
AS YOU COMMAND


AH?!
HO
HO
HO


THD THD
THD THD THD

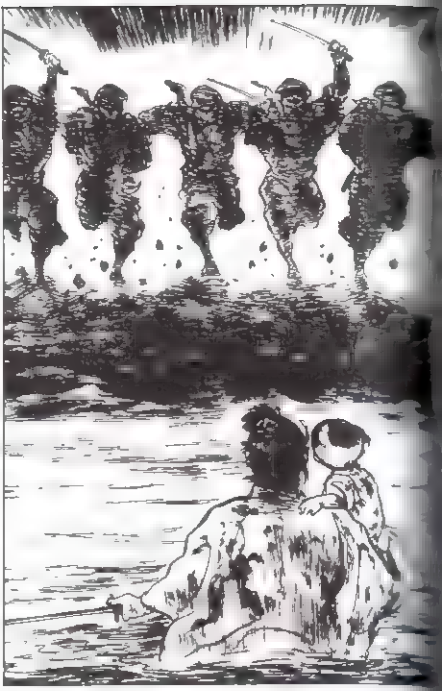
WHISS

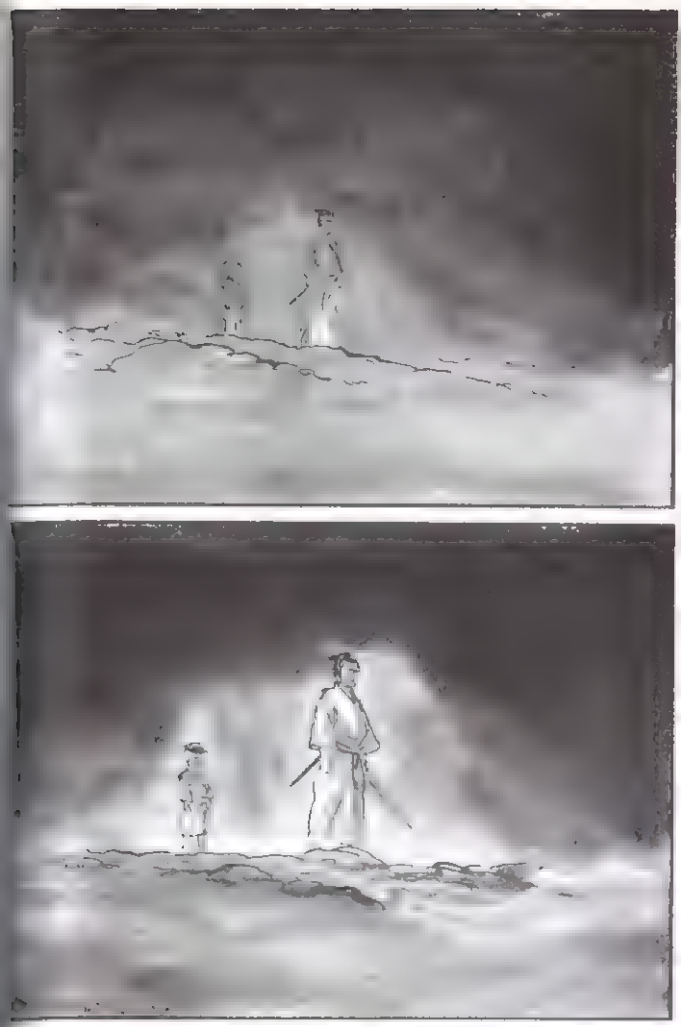
SKASSH

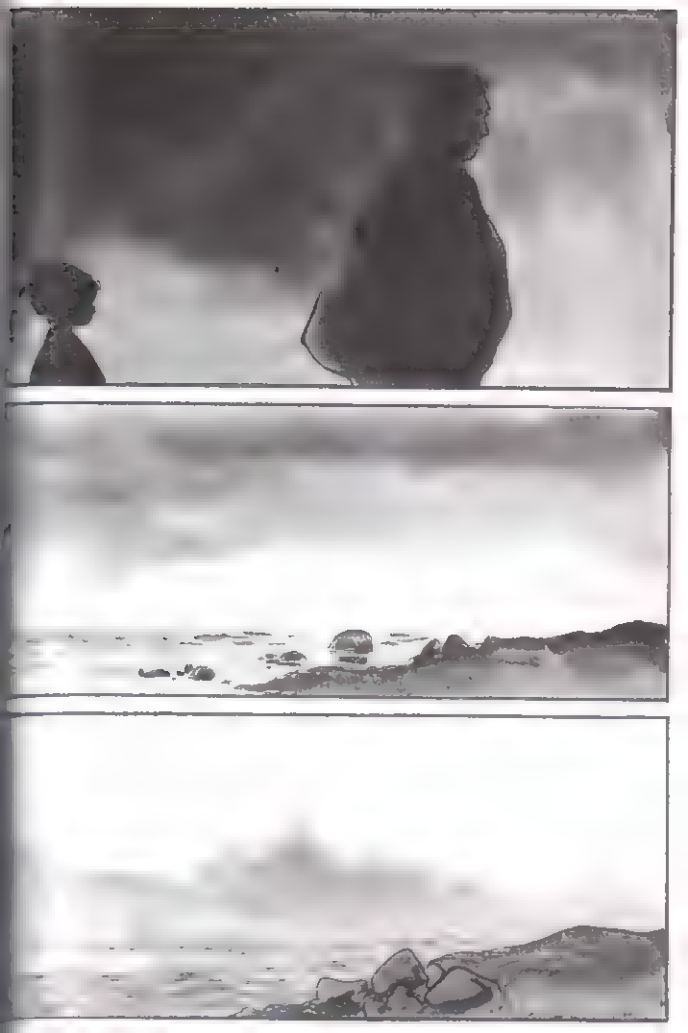
YAGYŪ GRASS...
KUMIZAKA HACHIBE...
BE READY DAIGORO HERE COMES THE DAWN

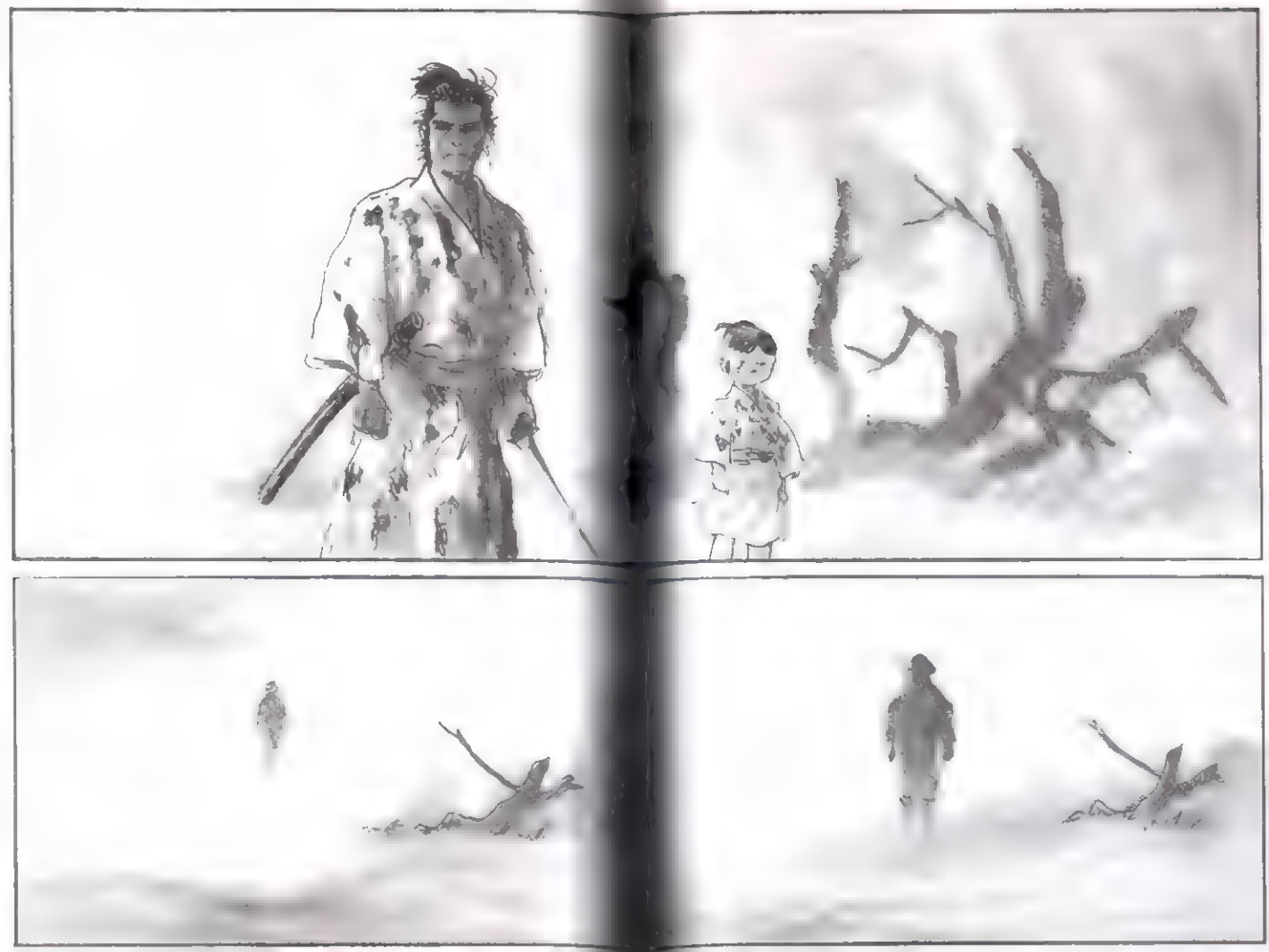
the hundred and thirty-seventh

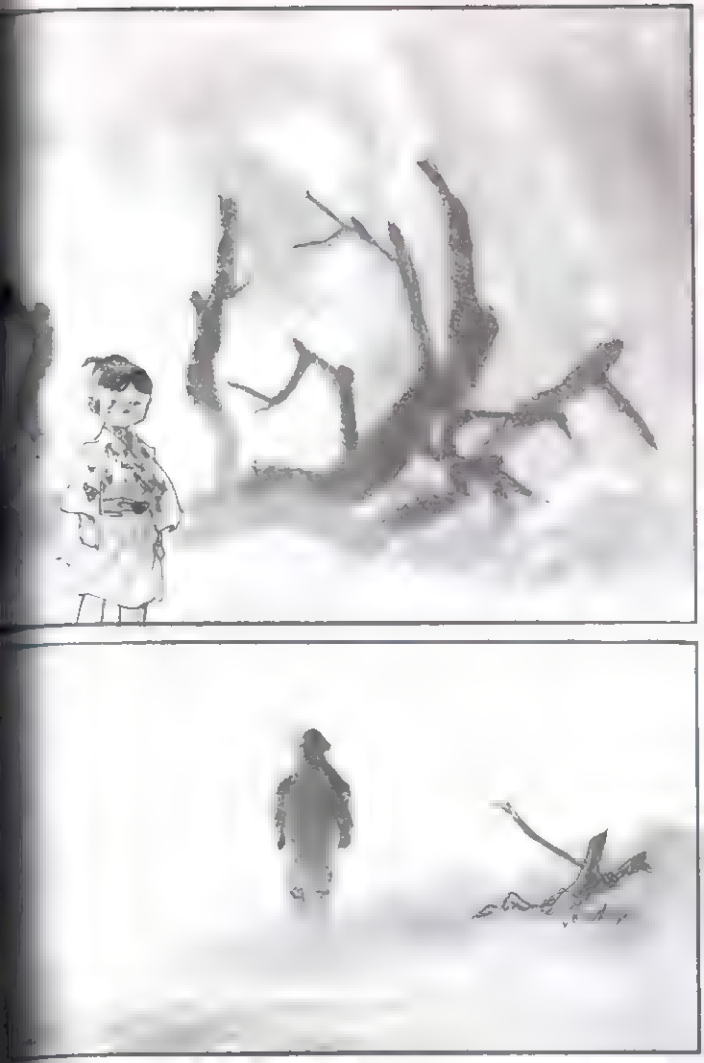
Grasses That Never Flower



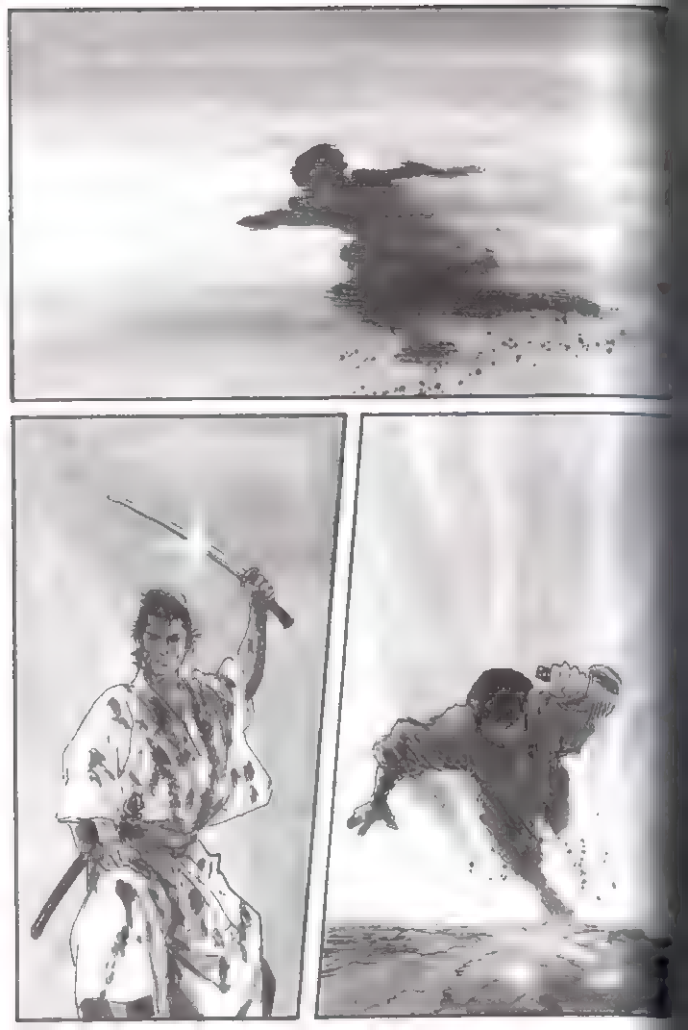




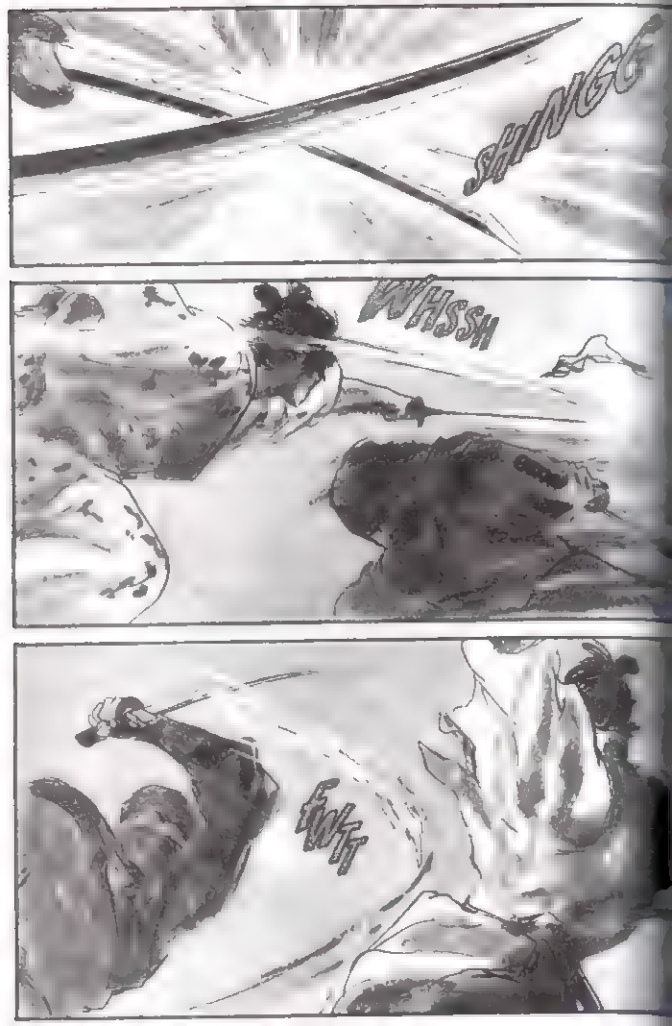


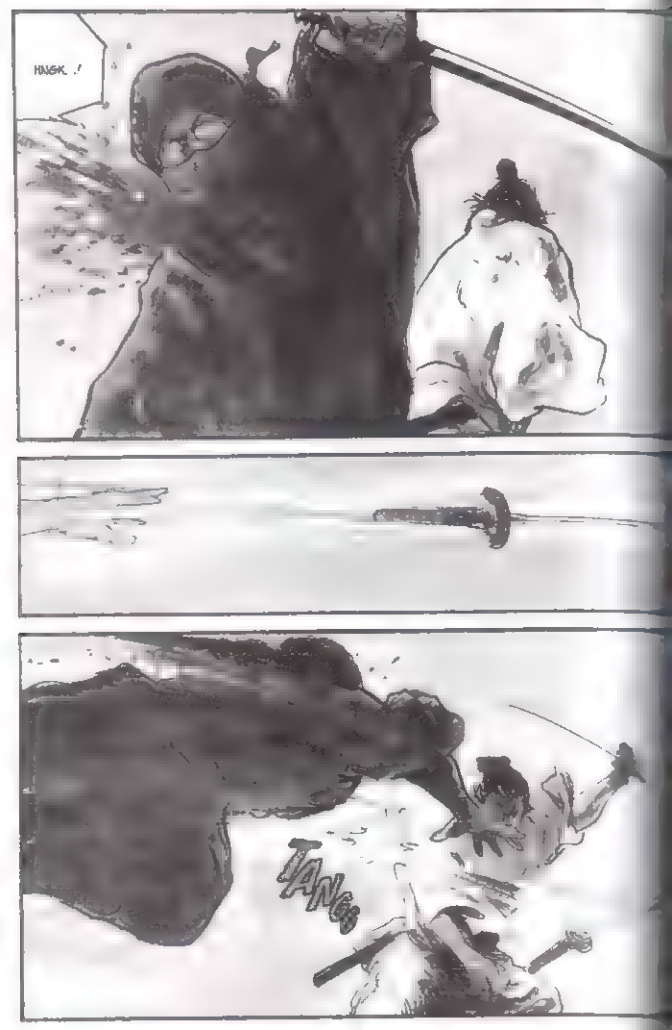


WHOOSH

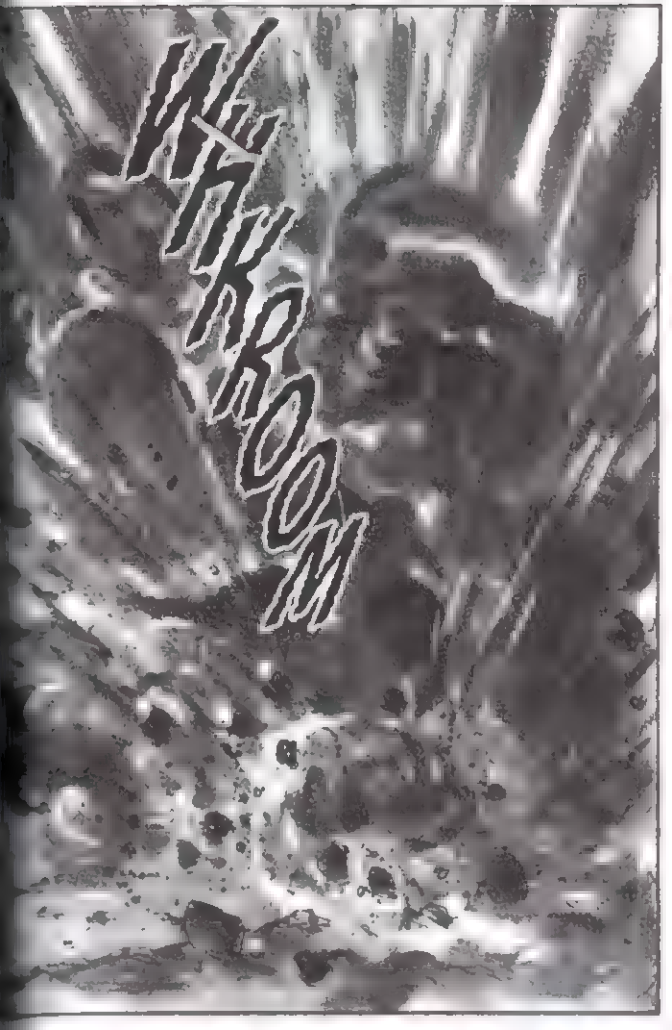


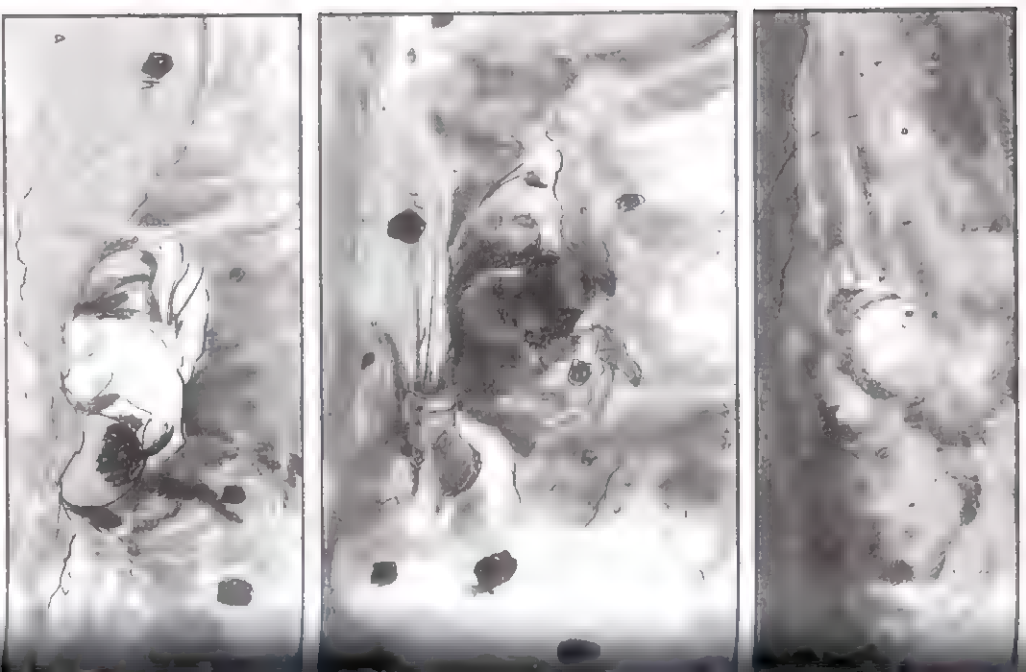
WAIT

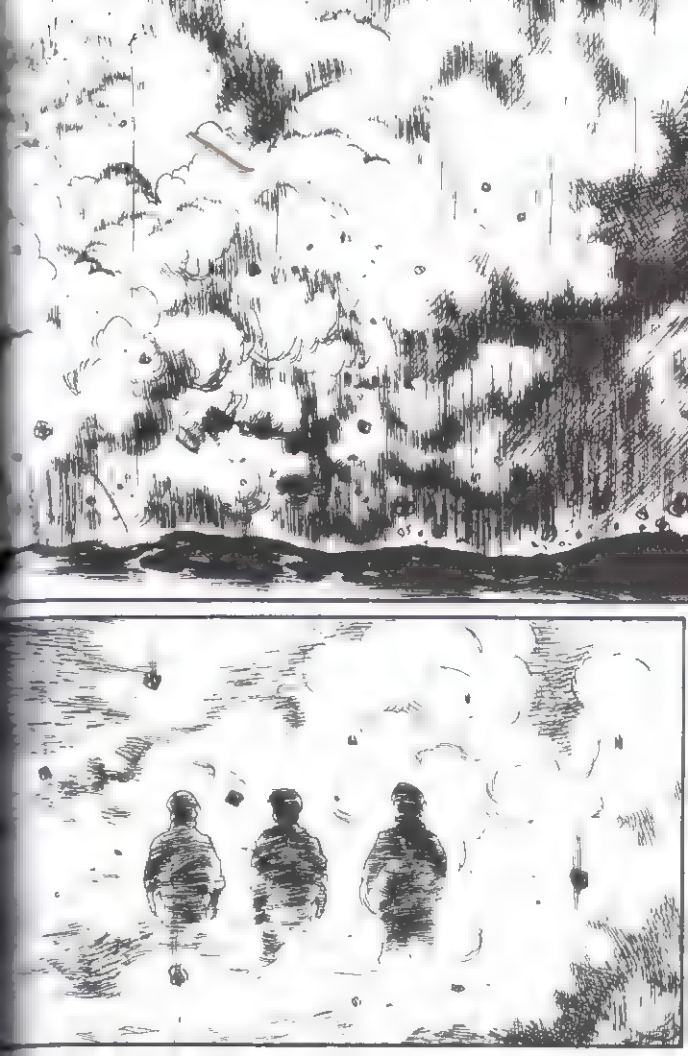

SHINGG
WHSSH
FWFT

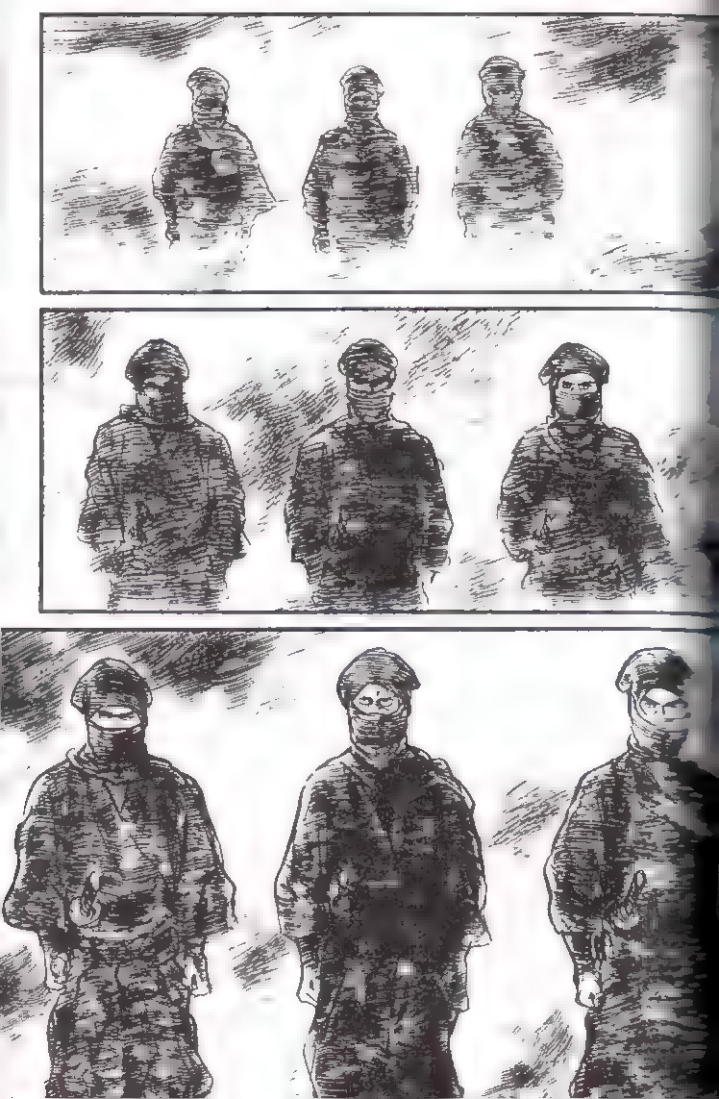

HNGK..!
TANG

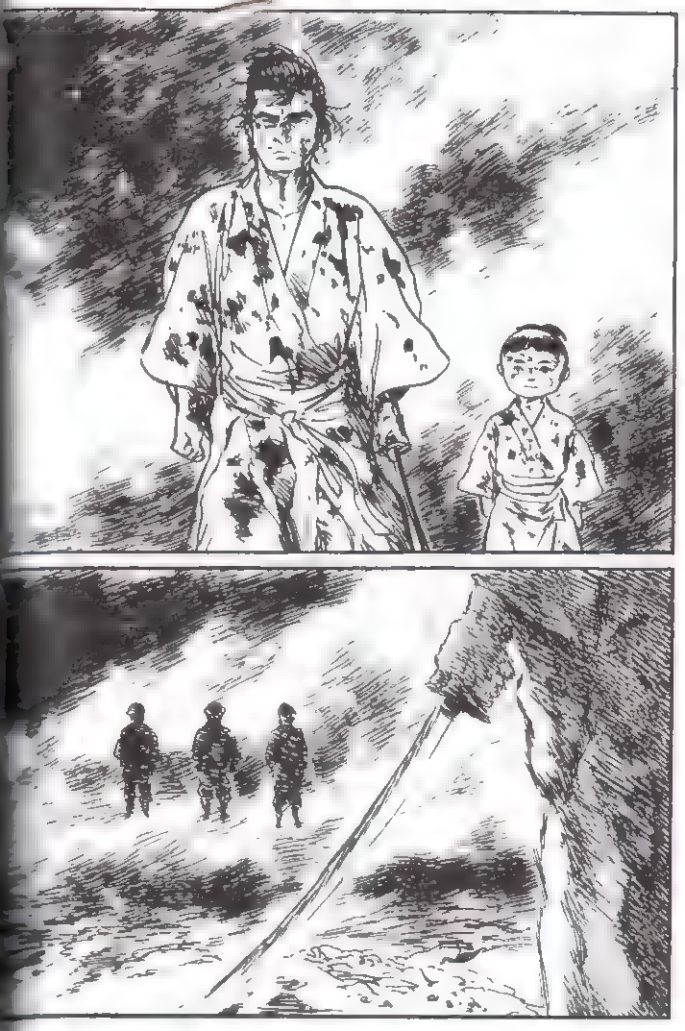
GCHOK
I AGYŪ SRASS YAMADA SKUME!

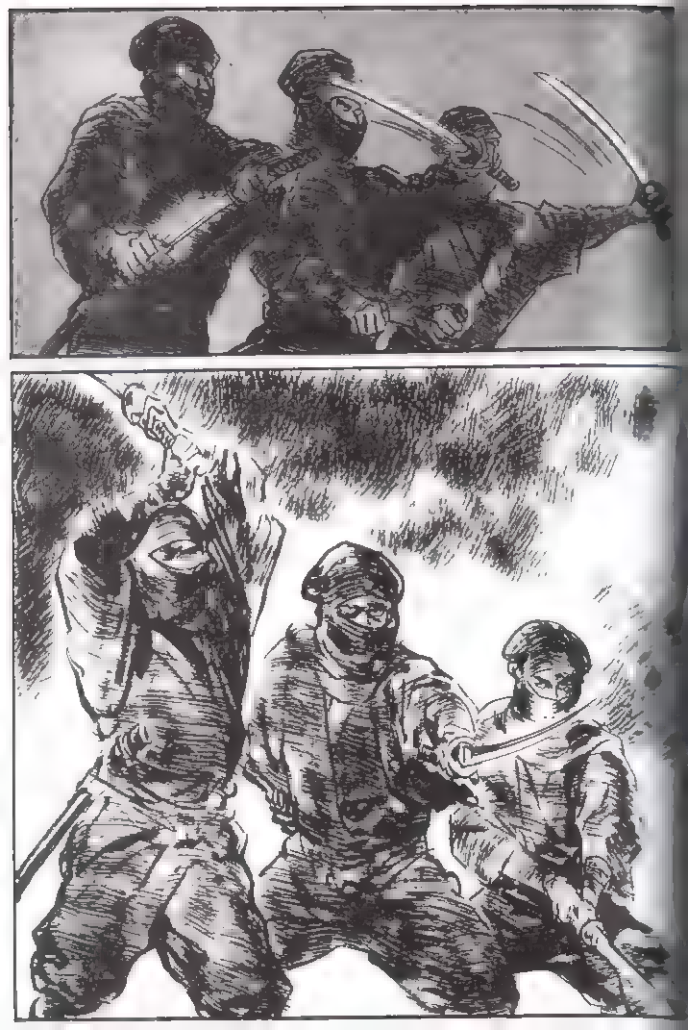

WHKROOM



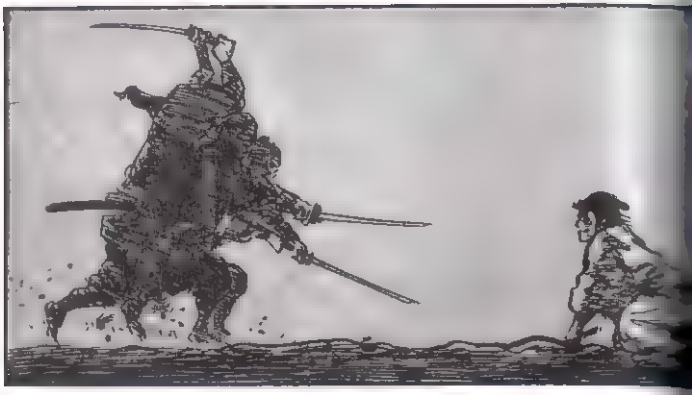


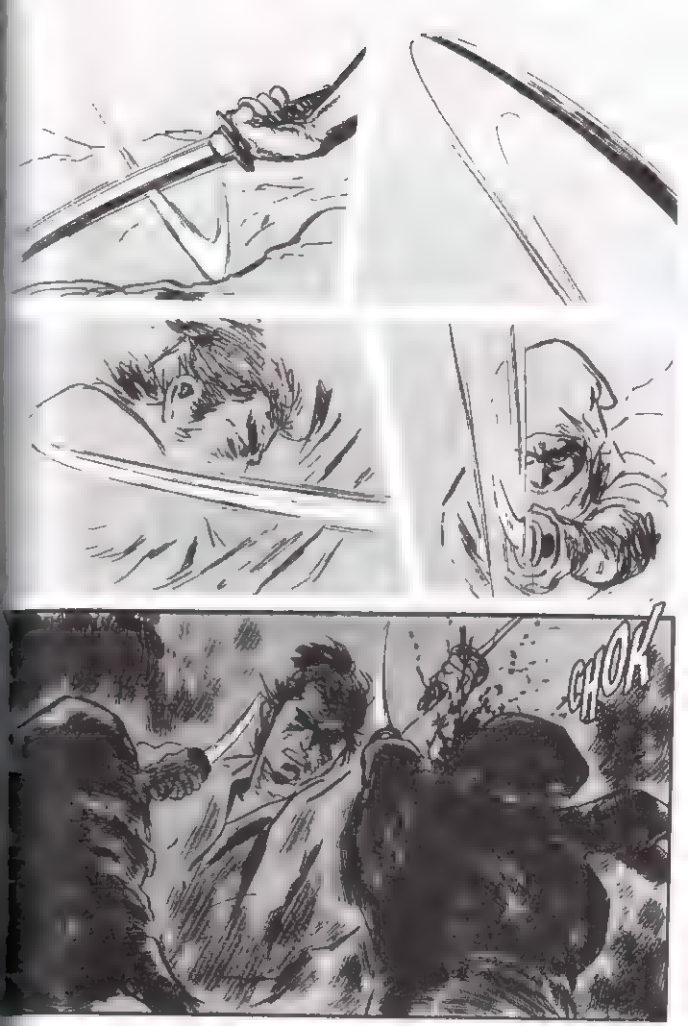


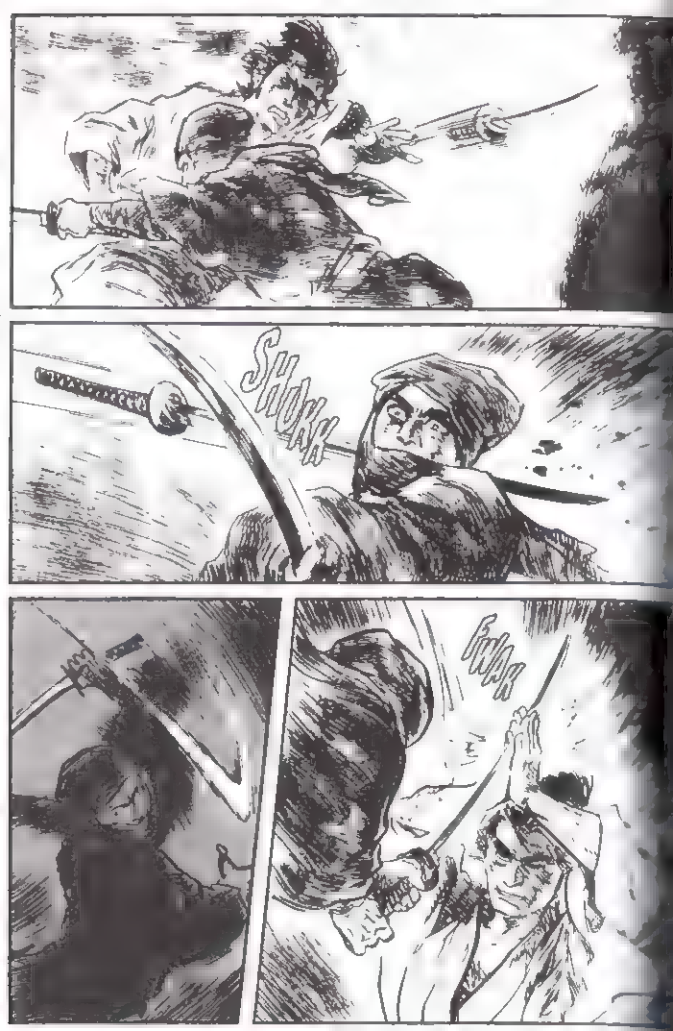




KSSA



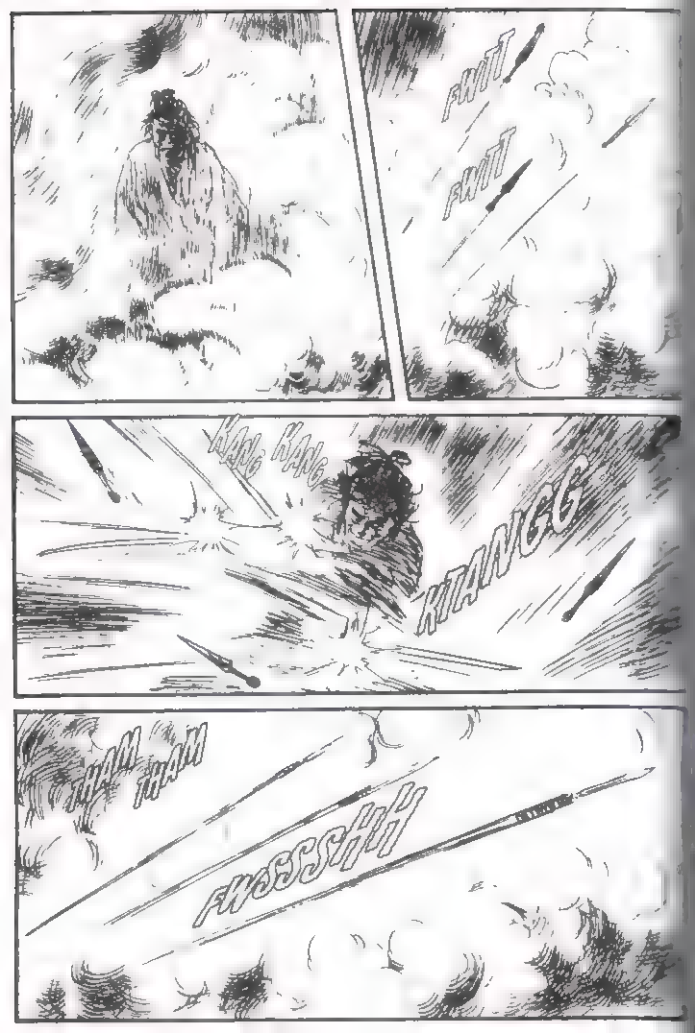

CHOK


SHUAK
FWA

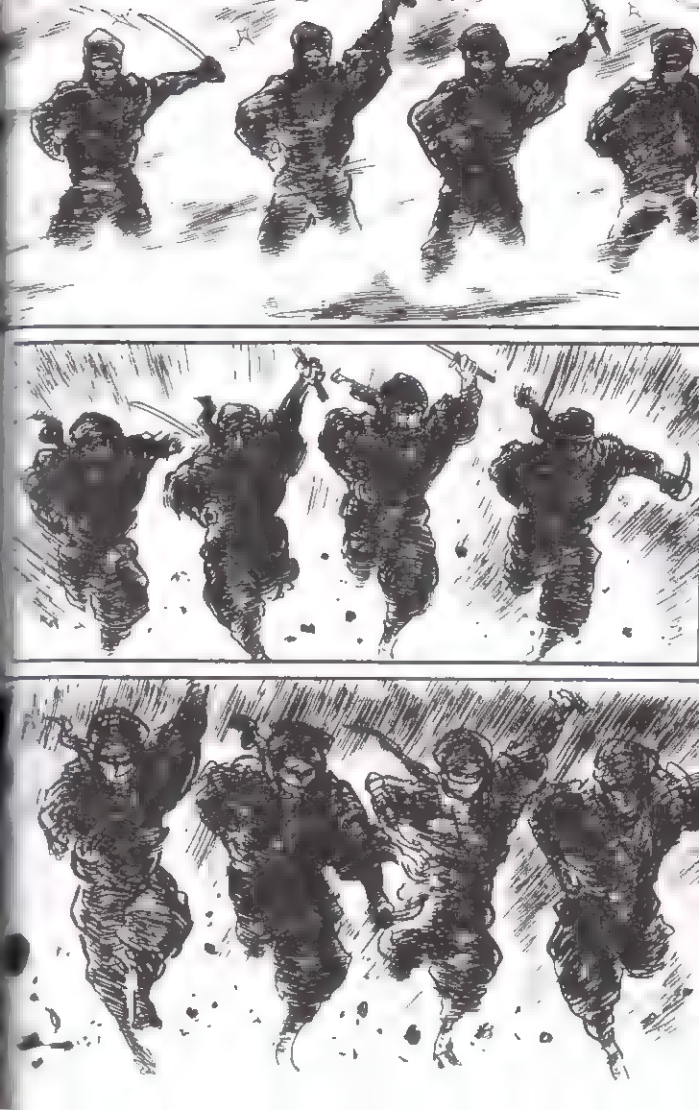
YAGYŪ.
GRASS.
NAKODERA
BUSHŌ
MIKAGE.
SHINKACHIRO .
MAKOMO
JŪNAI

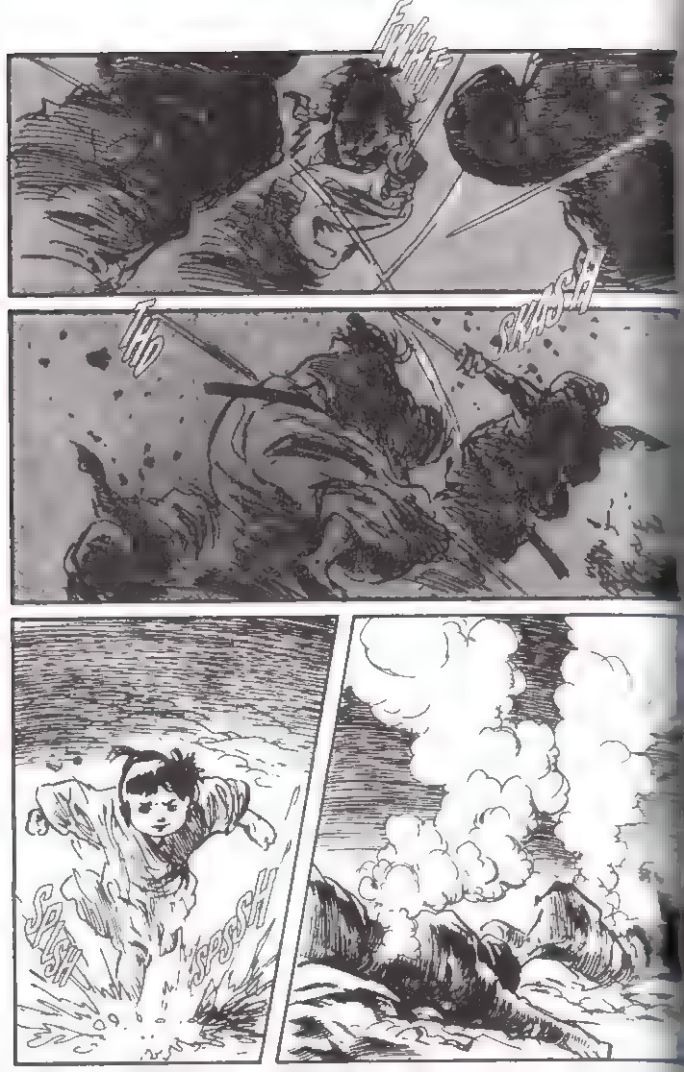
DAIGORO!!

WHOOM

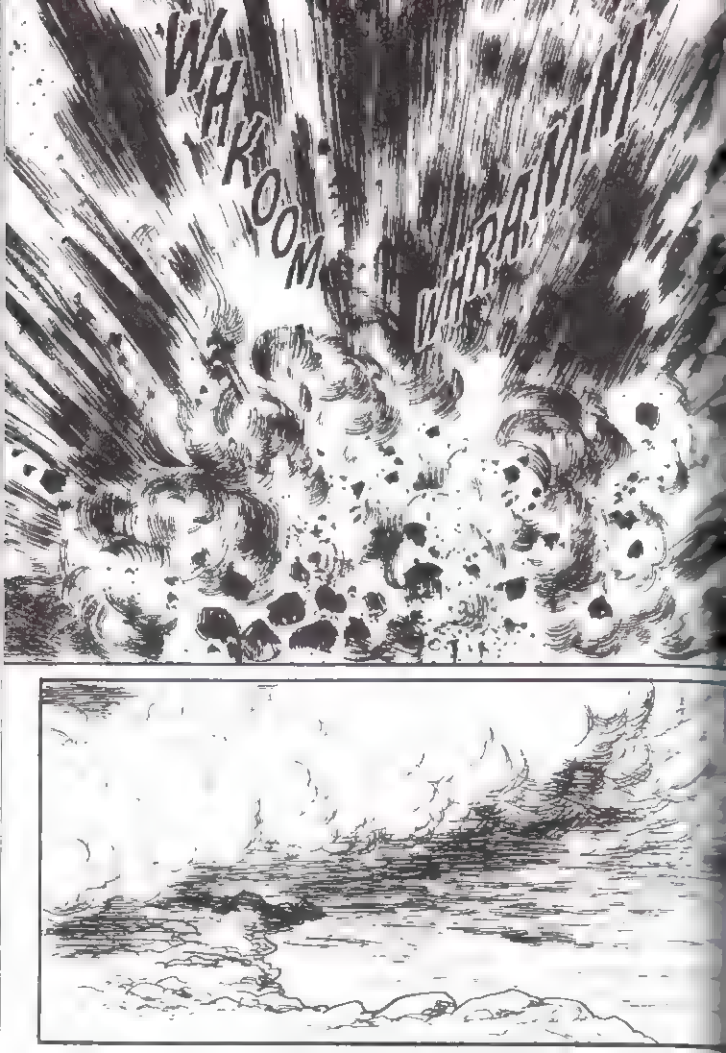

FWIT
FWIT
KANG KANG
KLANGG
THUM THUM
FWSSSHH

GHOK
KCHOK
KAWNG




FWHH
THD
SHISH
SPISH
SPESSH

KBLOOSH

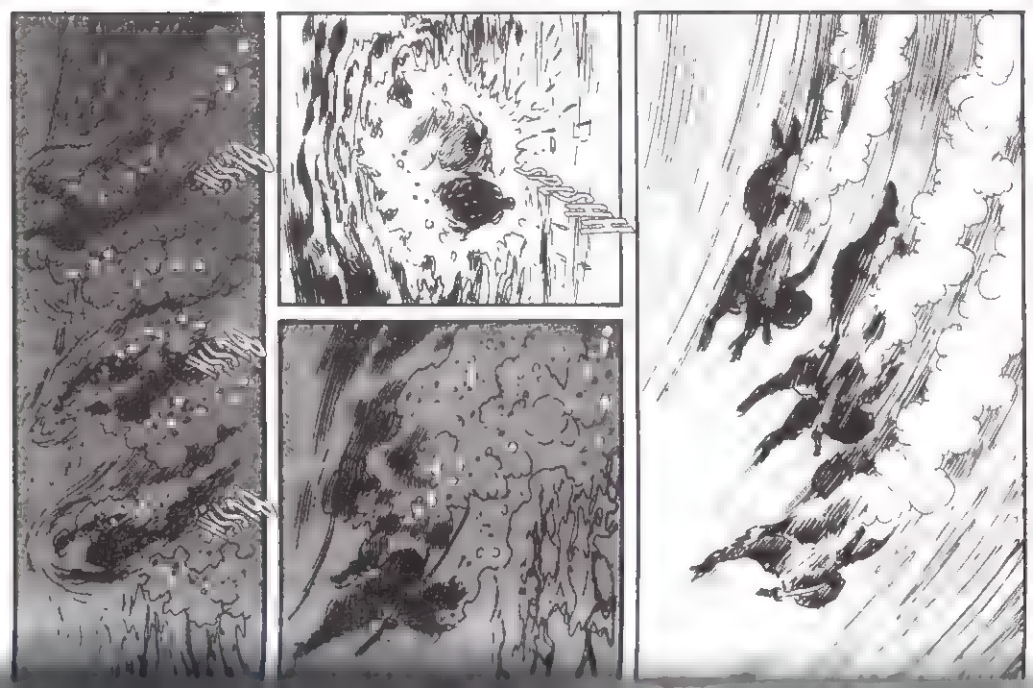

WHKOOM
KRAMM

HE'S READ US! WE CAN'T GET HIM IF HIDES IN THE RIVER!
YOU TWO, FLUSH HIM OUT! THE REST OF YOU, BE READY TO JUMP! LIGHT YOUR FUSES IN MID-AIR!
SPLSSH

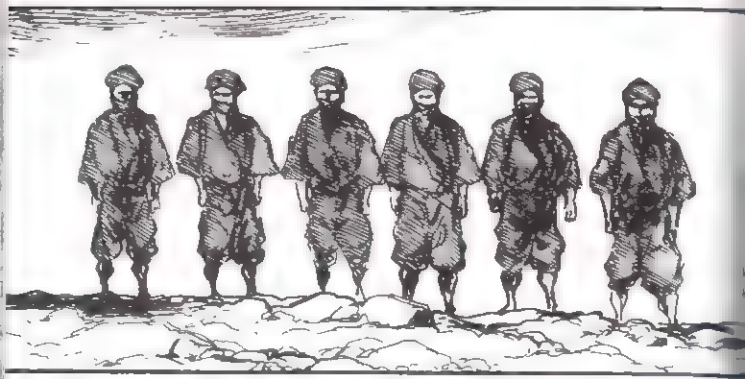
BLSSH.

CHOK
SKLSH
HP
AWP

WHST
FWHT
CHOKK



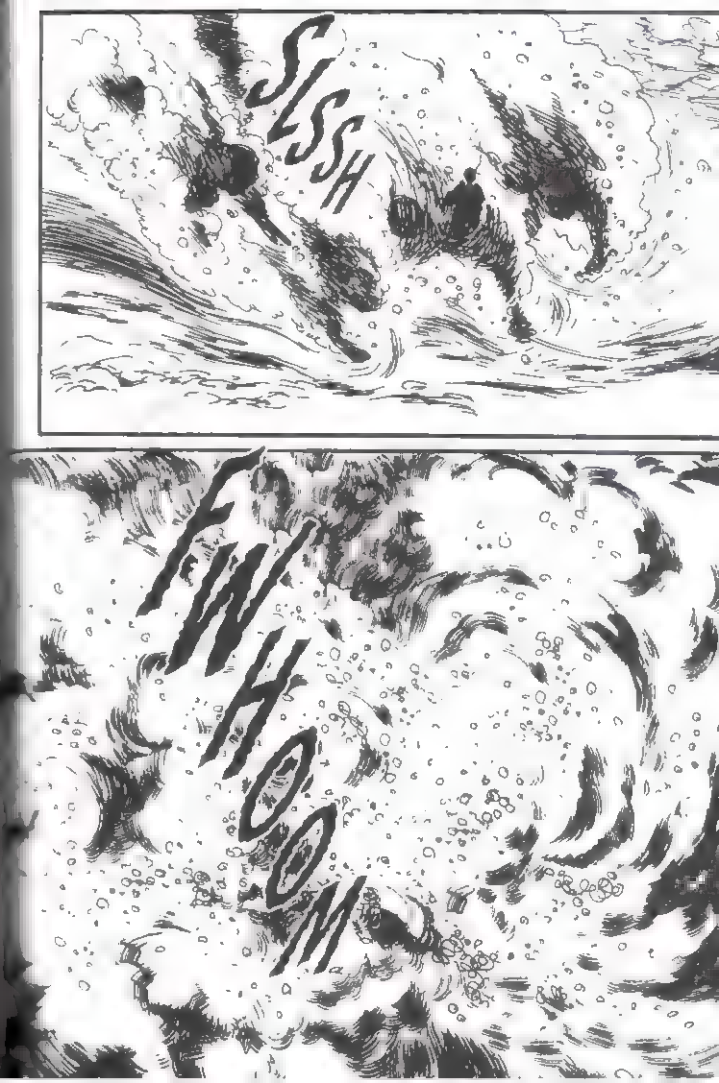
FWOOM
THKOOM
WHBLOOSH
SHWHSSSHH



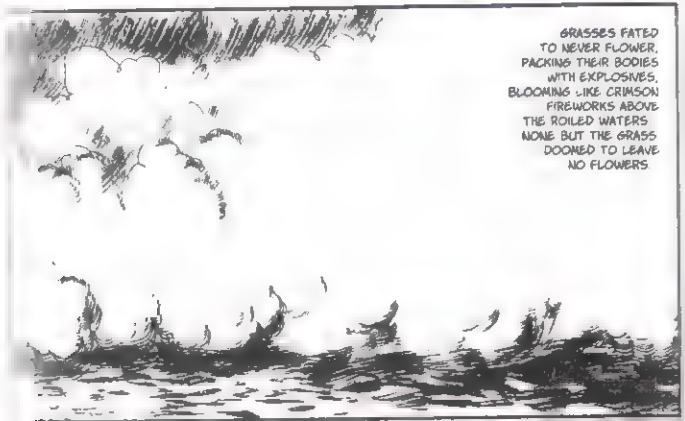
SLSSH
SPASSH
SPASSH
SPSSH

SSSSHHH

SHUKK
SKA-SSH
SHHOK
BLRSH
WHBLOOSH


SLSSH
FWHOOM

KBLOOSH
FHKOOOM


GRASSES FATED
TO NEVER FLOWER,
PACKING THEIR BODIES
WITH EXPLOSIVES,
BLOOMING LIKE CRIMSON
FIREWORKS ABOVE
THE ROILED WATERS
NONE BUT THE GRASS
DOOMED TO LEAVE
NO FLOWERS

GLOSSARY

bakkaku
The government. The shōgun, his councilors, and his senior officials.

bugyo
A position combining the post of mayor and chief of police for a town, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law. Rule was extended only to commoners.

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior. Also known as *shidō*.

dōtanuki
A battle sword. Literally, "sword that cuts through torsos."

Edo
Edo was a castle town, that rose up around the moats and ramparts of Edo castle, the stronghold of the Tokugawa clan. The central core of the city, administered by the *machi-bugyō* city commissioner, who reported directly to the shōgun's senior councilors, and was demarcated on official maps by a black line, the *kurobiki*, and was called the *go-funai*.

go-rōjū
Inner circle of councilors directly advising the shōgun (*"go" is used as an honorific term*).

han
A feudal domain.

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:
dono – archaic, used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures.
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals.
sama – used for superiors.
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians.

kōgi kaishakunin
The shogun's own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun.

kusa
Grass. In this case, the term refers to the secret ninja living normal lives and serving as spies in towns across Japan, thriving as grass in a field. They serve Yagyu Retsudō and send reports back to Edo.

machi-bugyō
The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimyō* and his officers. The *machi-bugyō* had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen at his disposal.

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

ryū
Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *deishi* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat. Many *ryu* also had a set of special, secret techniques that were only taught to school initiates.

ryūei
The shōgun and his family

shidō
Bushidō The way of the warrior

shihai
Master

shinobi
A generic term for ninja, meaning "one who moves in secrecy." Ninja had their heyday in the time of warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous shinobi were the ninja of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The Kurokuwa that appear in *Lone Wolf and Cub* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle. Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

shishu
Defending and protecting to the death

THE RONIN REPORT

By Tim Ervin-Gore

Lone Wolf and Cub in Film
(continued from volume 10)

Note: This is not a review, but a discussion piece. If you haven't seen this movie yet, read only the first two paragraphs. The rest might spoil your movie-watching experience.

As previously discussed in volume 10, the translation of comic books to film can be a challenging prospect. Though the two mediums share many similarities, there are undeniable and strong differences as well. In many ways, a comic book is much like a storyboard for a film. In fact, many comic-book artists do storyboard work for filmmakers on the side. It's a natural fit. And few comic-book artists have been as adept at bringing the visual elements of cinematography into the comics page as *Lone Wolf and Cub* artist Goseki Kojima.

Two years after *Lone Wolf and Cub* began its monthly serialization, the first of what would amount to six films ran on theater screens across Japan. This series of films would join a wide array of media based on the manga masterpiece, but the series, known in America as the "Babycart" series, had a leg up on the television shows and other films. With screenplays by Kazuo Koike himself, stoic acting from the popular samurai star Wakayama Tomisaburo as Ōgami Ittō, a perfect Daigoro performed by Akihiro Tomikawa, and lush, contemplative cinematography, the *Babycart* series had many elements that helped the *Lone Wolf and Cub* manga make the leap onto the silver screen.

In volume 10, the first film of the series, *Sword of Vengeance*, was discussed. In that piece we touched on the fact that the movie was comprised of numerous disparate scenes from the manga strung together to touch on many plot and character points while moving the story quickly through the limited space of a standard-length film. In this essay, we'll be covering four movies and concluding this study, so for extra insight, see volume 10.

The third movie of the series, titled *Babycart to Hades* is immediately noticeable in its reference to the manga. Ōgami and Daigoro are boarding a skiff to

travel down a river, and a girl drops her bundle in the water. Little Daigoro fishes it out with a stick, and the reader knows that the chapter entitled "The Virgin and the Whore" (*LW&C* Vol. 3) has been set to film. It's pretty impressive how well the movie follows elements of this story, right down to the salt on the prostitution-bound girl's travel-weary feet. However, before everyone gets to the inn, yet another chapter from *Lone Wolf and Cub* is interspersed. Chapter 46, "Wandering Samurai" (Vol. 9) unfolds on the road to the inn. In this chapter, *watari-kachi*, temporary retainers, journey to another han for another job, with intent to rape the first attractive ladies they see. In the manga, Ōgami has a duel with an honorable watari-kachi, and of course kills him. But in order to keep the character alive for later use, the director allows Ōgami to spare the man. This is interesting, because it seems unlikely that he would do so, but one understands after watching a few of these films that sometimes a plot point, even a likely action, must change in order to create an effective and entertaining movie.

Now, back to the inn. Soon a well-cast and very pretty Torizo shows up to claim the girl and exact revenge for killing her *zegen* (procurer). It should be mentioned that once again, the direction, set, and script are amazingly accurate with the original manga. Even the action is superbly directed, and the story plays out well. However, at the end of "The Virgin and the Whore," Ōgami hacks the heads off of a set of dolls, but in the movie version, they keep the story moving by having Torizo ask for an assassination herself. This is where the movie strays from the storyline and never bothers to go back. Some political wrangling happens, the story steals a snippet from yet another story, and eventually, Ōgami is faced by a large army. Here's where the film loses a little credibility. Ōgami relies heavily on guns. Not only does he use the gun in the cart, which has been changed into a machine gun, but he kills numerous soldiers with a pair of revolvers. Revolvers! Such technology didn't exist then, and neither did machine guns, but of course movies are about suspension of disbelief, right? In this case, the director is asking a lot from the faithful reader watching the movie, and Ōgami's character is largely degraded by this trespass. However, from another perspective, the guns seem like a play on American western films by adding a little shoot-'em-up to the mix, and there are lots of comparisons between samurai films and westerns in the history of cinematography.

In the fourth film of the series, *Babycart in Peril* (actual title — *Heart of the Parent, Heart of the Child*, sound familiar? see Vol. 1), the reader will be pleased to find a few classic stories woven together. Basically, the full text of "Performer" (Vol. 4), plays out through the film, but while the story moves, we are treated to another great story from volume 4, "Parting Frost," where little Daigoro escapes certain death by burying himself in the mud amidst

a raging grass fire. However, the samurai who notices Daigoro's *shishogan* eyes ends up being Gunbei Yagyū, and we're also treated to the flashback scene from "The Infinite Path" (Vol. 8), where Ittō becomes the *kaishakunin* by default. It's interesting to see how the scenes and characters are tied together to push the storyline while feeding readers a healthy dose of what they remember reading, albeit sometimes oddly out of order. Things start to go awry again when Ittō decides to spare Gunbei after besting him, but that's more than made up for if you like gore, because soon after there's a ninja fight scene in a temple that features limbs being hacked off and flying everywhere, gallons of squirting blood, and a couple of appendage-less torsos wriggling around on the floor. It's a little much, as often in these films there are choices to linger on more sensational subjects, namely blood and boobies. In a way, American audiences should relate to this, since Western films also take low roads in order to entertain a lesser common denominator. That being said, it's important to view these films as entertainment more than art. The film concludes with a familiar big battle scene, but this time Ittō is up against a Yagyū army, using more rifles. Ōgami even throws a few hand grenades into the fray. Once again, the direction opts for sensational scenes.

The fifth film, *Babycart in the Land of Demons*, or simply *Meifumado*, is an example of how confusing it can be to try to mix too much into one recipe. The basis for this film is a combination of the "Castle of Women" story in volume 15, and the story "Kyūshū Road," from volume 14, plus "Shattered Stones," from volume 12. If that's not confusing enough, they also throw in elements of "The Gateless Barrier" (Vol. 2), and "Penal Code Article Seventy-Nine" (Vol. 7). Of course, naming titles doesn't say much. In "Castle of Women," the lord of a *han* attempts to deceive the shogun into believing his daughter is a boy so she can be the rightful heir to the clan. In "Kyūshū Road," you have face mask-wearing spear fighters and a *han* official trying to elevate his prospects by killing Ittō. In "Shattered Stones," you've got a former samurai avenging his wife's leaving him to be a *han* lord's concubine, and the girl child is tied into that story as well. Mix those three parts and you have the general basis for the story, but then there are other elements. The priest from "Gateless Barrier" is in there, but he's corrupt and Ittō kills him in an absurd manner. And Daigoro has his own little side adventure covering for a pickpocket from the "Penal Code" story. Actually, the section of the movie based on this story shines on its own and is the best part of this film. It's very faithfully done, and Akihiro Tomikawa perfects Daigoro's character. That scene almost saves the film, but the confusion is too much to overcome. Once again we have a big battle at the end of the movie, and in an unprecedented move, Ōgami leaves the fray, letting the Kuroda clan (the masked, spear-wielding warriors) do his fighting for him. It's certainly an odd way to end the film.

The sixth and final film in the series is also, unfortunately, the worst. Entitled *White Heaven In Hell*, the film certainly has its positive points, but the obvious sensationalism thrown into the plot can be a little distracting. *White Heaven In Hell* starts strong, jumping straight into the "Sayaka" story from volume 16. In this story, a Yagyū daughter uses the *ō-tedama* (juggling dagger) fighting style, and it allows for plenty of gore right off the bat. Of course, Sayaka falls victim to Ōgami's blade, the opening credits roll, and soon after, so does the head of the faithful *Lone Wolf and Cub* reader. Before cutting into the meat of the main plot, there's a scene where Ittō and Daigoro visit the grave of Ittō's wife (Daigoro's mother) and the sanctimony of the scene is broken when Ittō grabs the babycart and shoots machine gun bullets into a wall. Suddenly, a quartet of what might be ninja fall out of the plaster in the wall. It feels a tad ridiculous, and though I could imagine a standard moviegoer being entertained by the concept of a ninja sealing himself into a wall, it's still rather odd.

The theme of oddness continues in this film as the story takes a turn to the mystical. The central plot of this film attempts to combine the story "The Moon in the East, the Sun in the West" (Vol. 13) with ideas from "Incense for the Living," plus the tactics from "Five Wheels of the Yagyū," both from volume 15, but not connected in context. The glue for these disparate chunks is a mysticism based on the living incense ceremony of the *yama metsuke*. However, instead of burying one man for a few hours, they bury three men for forty-five days, turning them into zombie-like warriors who can burrow into the earth. This is an entertaining addition, but it's a little too unbelievable to enjoy thoroughly.

What most misrepresents the integrity of the series is how Yagyū is treated at the end of the series. I don't want to blow it for anyone, but this "final" movie in no way reflects how the manga ends. In fact, watching the end of this video, one might realize that even though a lot of familiar scenes pass before the viewer's eyes, it's not really a fair representation of the manga. In fact, the differences between the *Lone Wolf and Cub* movies and manga are distinct enough to be considered separate stories, and the serious *Lone Wolf* reader will best approach the films as light entertainment instead of expecting the profound, weighty moral tale that comes from reading through the manga. After all, the two mediums, though similar in a few ways, are very different in how they work and the economy of production, and one should never expect a film to completely translate something previously in book form, even if it's a comic book. Let go of what you thought was important and enjoy these films for what they are — campy, bloody, sexy, and oddly beautiful — instead of what you'd expect them to be.